



Peace-making power-sharing.

Richard Lung.

Democracy Science. Book one..



Peace-making power-sharing.

(Democracy Science, 1.)

Copyright © 2015: Richard Lung.
First edition.

Table of Contents.

Canadian Citizens Assemblies on election methods:

British Columbia chooses a voting system.

Citizens Assemblies of Canada choose a voting system.

STV elections, not single member exclusions nor list appointments.

Ontario Citizens Assembly and due process for future assemblies.

"One Ballot. Two Votes." as a premature report... (And Ontario CA "Democracy At Work.")

Referendums

Party leaders sabotaged the BC Citizens Assembly and referendum experiment.

The Straw Man Referendum on the Alternative Vote in the UK.

The duncing of a nation: How misrepresentation won the AV referendum.

When knowledge fails belief: referendums.

Other developments

[Choice Voting](#) America? (Proportional Representation by Single Transferable Vote: STV/PR.)

[Power](#) in the European Union and English regions.

The [Ashdown Diaries](#) 1997 - 1999: lessons for electoral reform.

[The Two Cultures](#) and electoral lawlessness in Britain...

Open letter to [the Speakers Conference](#) on Parliamentary Representation.

Consultation on [Scotlands electoral future](#).

Simple [examples](#) of election counts by the single transferable vote (STV).

En français (In French):

[Modèle Scientifique](#) du Procès Electoral. (Scrutin Transferable: Single Transferable Vote.)

[Notice](#) of forthcoming sequel on voting method and electoral reform.

[Guide](#) to five volume collected verse by Richard Lung.

[To top](#).

Peace-making power-sharing.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Reflecting on his rich experience in the Duma, Vasili Maklakov stressed that the most durable achievements of a democratic system derive from the agreements between the majority and the minority, rather than from a preponderance of the former over the latter.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn: Rebuilding Russia.

The meetings would continue until some kind of consensus was reached. They ended in unanimity or not at all. Unanimity, however, might be an agreement to disagree, to wait for a more propitious time to propose a solution. Democracy meant all men were to be heard, and a decision was taken together as a people. Majority rule was a foreign notion. A minority was not to be crushed by a majority.

Nelson Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom.

Canadian Citizens Assemblies on election methods.

[To Table of Contents](#)

As one commentator notes, 'how can it make sense to ...place the ... wisdom [resulting from an assembly] at the disposition of a feckless and ignorant majority' (French, 2012, p.67) via referendum? Put another way, why place so much emphasis on the learning and education of citizens and the value of their reasoned opinion and then place the final decision with a process which clearly does not meet those principles?....

The other possibility, as in the Dutch case, is for an assembly to make its recommendations directly to Parliament. This ushers in a second problem the assembly sought to avoid, of self-interested politicians making the final decision and ignoring an assembly's recommendations (as was the Dutch experience).

Citizens Assemblies and Policy Reform in New Zealand.
Janine Hayward.

The following chapters on Canadian Citizens Assemblies were written whilst they were happening. I have decided to leave them as responses to those events, in a living present.
This work edited and augmented pages originally appearing on my Democracy Science web-site.

British Columbia chooses a voting system.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Links to sections:

The bug-bear of bad voting methods.

[First past](#) the post.

Instant [run-off voting](#) (alternative vote).

[Party list](#) systems.

Additional/[Mixed Member](#) system.

Single [transferable vote](#) (STV).

The bug-bear of bad voting methods.



The government lets a random selection of the public review the options in a Citizens Assembly. The voters then make the final choice, in a referendum on the voting system British Columbia should use.

The politicians or any other special interests are not allowed to pre-empt the decision, because their interests might conflict with the public interest. General elections are supposed to serve the general interest.

All credit to the British Columbian government for this enlightened and disinterested attitude for the good of the community as a whole.

In the past thirty years, there has been a revision of voting methods, even in the English-speaking countries and more change is likely. This essay is just a period snap-shot of that process, but at an important stage of change.

Up till now, other governments have not been so generous towards the public in letting them decide the rules of their own elections. It is true that the New Zealand government allowed a referendum on different voting methods. Unlike the BC government, they pre-empted the decision with the recommendation of a government commission. And this official recommendation narrowly won the referendum.

It was also the case that most of the big money went into persuading the New Zealanders to keep the first past the post voting system. The money bias in favor of the traditional system doesn't alter the fact that there was an official bias in favor of the new system.

Yet New Zealand allowed far more open consultation than in Britain, until a couple of recent exceptions, such as the Kerley report and the Sunderland report. They had explicitly democratic terms of reference -- notably elusive from some previous official studies of elections.

The citizens of British Columbia are fortunate to be allowed to freely decide their democratic destiny. With that freedom comes responsibility. The people will not only test the best voting system for their country. Their decision will also be a test on their soundness of judgment.

Solon, the founder of Greek democracy, was asked whether he gave the Athenians the best laws. He replied: No, only the best they were capable of receiving.

Here follows a simple guide to the serious contenders for voting system of choice.

First past the post



First past the (trading) post.

[To top](#)

This is the traditional voting system, that has resisted change longest in English-speaking countries, such as Canada. It certainly has the advantage of being familiar to the voters. As a student, many years before reform was an issue, I remember being awoken reluctantly from my "dogmatic slumbers" by having to do an essay on voting methods.

This is just the situation faced by the voters of British Columbia, especially those lucky enough to win a lottery ticket for a seat in the Citizens Assembly.

I took the first past the post system completely for granted. I didn't see anything wrong with it. There was a contest. Some candidates got the most votes and were elected. Simple!

Well, I doubt there are too many people so uninformed nowadays.

The reform campaigners point out that first past the post elections may not elect a party, to govern, that had the most votes in the country for its candidates. First past the post elections of candidates may not translate into first past the post elections of parties to governments. This happened in Britain in 1951 and february 1974; in Canada in 1979; in New Zealand in 1978 and 1981; and in India in 1991. The system may be familiar but it is defective.

This is the main test applied here, to all the voting systems reviewed. Does the voting system give the voters what they ask for? Does it even allow them to ask for what they may be entitled?

First past the post is also called the "simple majority" system. This is another way of saying that the winner takes all. The candidate with more votes than any other candidate, in a constituency, takes the seat. When several candidates each take substantial shares of the votes, the winner may take the seat with quite a small percentage of the constituency vote.

Winning with a third of the vote is not unusual. First past the post in the twenty-some per-cents is not unknown. Victories on percentages of votes in the low forties, are typical. This may be said of parties winning the government, as well as of individual candidates, who make up the parties.

So what?

Well, it's not democratic. The majority of the votes, in the so-called "simple majority" system are actually wasted. This is disproportional representation.

The 1993 Canadian federal election saw the governing Conservatives reduced to one seat, or 0.7% of seats for 16.1% the national vote.

The Liberal party won 60.3% the seats for 41.6% the votes.

This near twenty per cent over-representation of a ruling party is also a familiar feature of British elections.

In 1998, nearly 20% under-represented, the Quebec Liberals won 44.2% votes for 25.8% or 46 seats. Parti Quebecois won over 61% or 77 seats for 43.2% votes. They won two-thirds more seats, in the Constituent Assembly, for less votes. PQ would, if propitious, hold a third referendum to secede from the Canadian federation.

Supporters of FPTP allege it gives decisive results for strong and stable government. Especially when more than two parties get a look-in, simple majorities become indecisive and unstable. Canadas 2011 elections were the fourth in seven years.

(PRSA Quota Notes.)

You wouldnt be very pleased if you were short-changed like that, as a customer, and you wouldnt put up with it. So why let their majesties, the politicians get away with it?!

Most voters never get to choose a personal representative.

Supporters claim the system gives individual representation.

Actually, one representative monopolises the representation in a single member constituency. Most of the voters usually don't want him but are stuck with him.

This fact, that first past the post doesn't do its job for so many people, has been blamed for the falling turn-outs at elections in America, Canada, and now Britain. Governments are responding by trying to make voting easier, as if present generations are unable to find their way to a polling station, should they wish.

In UK elections, 2001, turn-out was 10% higher in marginal constituencies than in safe seats.

This so-called democratic system may allow the government to be hi-jacked or usurped by a minority. So much for "strong and stable government." Even a two-party system can produce inequities encouraging and establishing dangerous extremism in government.

The classic example is how Apartheid was introduced into South Africa. Two first past the post elections allowed the minority to win, because the majority vote piled up in constituencies, where it was largely wasted, electing representatives with many more votes than they needed.

Fear, of a minority usurpation of the government, was largely behind the growth of an all-party campaign for Fair Votes in Britain, from the last quarter of the twentieth century. Conservatives feared that a left wing Labour government might be elected with less than forty per cent of the voters. They didn't want British industry and the banks to be nationalised

In 2005, Labour was elected with 35% the votes [P.S. And banks were nationalised in Britain (also in America) not to their damnation but to their salvation, not ours, in the 2008 credit crunch!]
Labour won a 55% majority of seats. This 20% inflation of representation, thru FPTP, was mainly at the expense of third and lesser parties, the agents of much-needed change, rather than the Conservative opposition.

Nearly 20% was also about the over-representation of the Tories in 1983.

1987 saw Mrs Thatchers third election victory. The opposition part of the establishment, "the sub-establishment" (as E P Thompson called it) feared the winner-takes-all game was too loaded against them.

The opposition vote was always split between Labour and the Liberals, or Liberal Democrats, as they became.

As a consequence, in the early 1990s, the Labour party Plant report recommended a Supplementary Vote.

Instant run-off voting (alternative vote)



Instant run-off boating.

[To top](#)

The Supplementary Vote would give the voters a second vote. Most of the minor opposition parties were to the Left. Most likely, their supporters would give their second vote to the main opposition party - none other than Labour.

The Supplementary Vote was like French Second Ballot, except that the voters wouldn't have to go to the polls twice, to cast their two choices. Both these systems are a restricted form, a one-alternative vote, of the Alternative Vote, used in Australian general elections to the lower house of parliament.

Analysts were under no illusion that much of British Labour favored some such system, because French and Australian socialist or Labour parties seemed, at the time, to prosper under the Alternative Vote-type systems. These systems tend to make the votes, for the break-away Left, count towards the main left-wing party.

That is just one instance of how a given voting system can trick a result in favor of some political faction. Conversely, first past the post tricks a result in favor of an orthodox bloc, which by definition doesn't suffer so much from split voting. The British Tory party is likely to go to its grave, clinging onto the first past the post system, because it dares not let go of the hugely unfair electoral advantage from keeping the votes of its two main left wing opponents divided, instead of united against themselves.

The Alternative Vote is called Run-off Voting, in North America. More fully, it is known as Instant Run-off Voting, bearing in mind that the voters make all their choices at one visit to the polls.

The Alternative Vote allows the voters more than one alternative choice of candidate. The alternative vote gives the order of choice for candidates. The voters put the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, etc by their first, second, third, fourth, etc choice of candidates.

One might think that this would elect the most preferred candidates, and therefore, the Alternative Vote must be democratic. However, this is not the case. The reason is that not only the vote must be democratic but also the count. In the count of the alternative vote, the voters order of choice does not ensure that the candidates will be elected as most of the voters preferred.

The alternative vote is conducted in a single member system. If one candidate gets more than half the first preferences, then no other candidate can over-take. The election is over without reference to later preferences. If no candidate has an over-all majority, in the first

round, then the candidate, least in the running, must stand down. This releases the already failed candidates second preferences to help make-up a majority for one of the remaining candidates. This process of elimination is repeated for as long as it takes to find the over-all winner.

The problem with this system is that the lesser preferences of candidates with the least first preferences tend to be decisive in electing the front-runners for a single seat. This is, as Winston Churchill said, "the worst votes for the worst candidates."

The heart of the problem is the single member system which ensures that one candidate monopolises a constituency. In a multi-member constituency, the front runners needn't be played off against each other. More than one of the most popular candidates could be elected, provided they reached a big enough share or proportion of the votes in the multi-member constituency.

A multi-member system is needed that allows more of the first and higher preferences to count towards candidates election.

To this end, Churchill provided the other wittiest saying about electoral reform: I would rather be one-fifth of the members for the whole of Leeds than one member for a fifth of Leeds.

In 1996, the Australian House of Representatives elections, using the Alternative Vote, gave the Liberal party coalition 64% the seats. They claimed this as a "mandate" for their legislation to be passed by the Senate, where Liberals were in a minority. The government failed to mention that 53.2% of first preferences for the lower House went to their opponents.

For over half a century since 1949, the House of Representatives has produced a range of preferential support between two parties, ranging from 48% to 52%.

It makes one wonder that if Britain had the Alternative Vote, whether the swing between Left and Right in Britain would have been as statistically insignificant.

The FPTP split between Labour and the Liberals may have reduced history to a mythology of a Conservative century. This, no doubt, goes a long way to explain the successful Tory hysteria against the 2011 Alternative Vote referendum, as the end of democracy. The cry wolf, against the end of civilisation, as we know it, contained the (greatly exaggerated) terror of the end of "democracy" as the criers knew it.

The under-lying moral of this farce is to ask what is the sense of a sequence of governments by statistically insignificant majority rules, pulling one way and then the other, without trying to reconcile each others view-points by wholly representative executives of the nation. PR in government as well as in parliament must be the sensible way to go.

Both first past the post and an alternative vote are usually single member systems for general elections. The two main parties at least agree on keeping the single member system, because it narrows the choice down to the main two party contenders, when voting for anyone else would be a wasted vote.

Much negative campaigning from the big two parties has concentrated on making the smaller parties an object of ridicule, because a vote for them would be wasted.

This twisting the voters arms is bound to be resented and degrades democracy.



Cliff-hanger elections.

The supporters of a two-party system justify this corraling the vote as forcing the voters to make their mind up, even if between two unpalatable choices. Because, it makes for decisive government, where one of two parties get most of the seats, even if (as usual) they get less than half the votes.

Cliff-hanger elections are said to result from allowing the vote to be shared out between more than two parties. Then these parties decide in "smoke-filled rooms" on a coalition, after the election. The voters are left out from a decisive say in who shall govern. The people don't even get the two-party system choice between the lesser of two evils.

The sections, below, on proportional elections, will look at this question.

It is commonly said that the Alternative Vote is not a wasted vote, because one's second preference (or lesser preference) ultimately

helps to elect someone. But the fact is that the alternative vote does waste votes. The most important votes, the first preferences are especially wasted, because only the first preferences of one candidate can count in a single member constituency. This usually means more than half the first preferences are wasted.

Even in a quite small multi-member constituency, of three or four seats, something like two-thirds of the first preferences will be for candidates who get elected. That is in Ireland with proportional elections called the Single Transferable Vote. STV is a big improvement, over the alternative vote, in representative democracy

At this point, many electoral campaigners protest that most systems of proportional representation in the world don't use STV preference voting with a proportional count. Other systems are based on proportional counts of X-votes for party lists.

Party list systems



Party lists count the wolf as his pack.

[To top](#)

Party list systems thru-out the world all work on the basic idea that a vote is for a party, rather than individual candidates. Parliamentary seats are then shared out between the parties in proportion to their number of party votes. Typicly, the party candidates on a list are elected in the order their party boss has put them.

With STV all the voters may give their order of choice for the candidates election. But with party lists, as few as one person per

party (the party boss) has a preference vote to decide the order of election. That is to say, the difference between the single transferable vote and the party list systems is the difference between democracy and dictatorship, as far as individual representation is concerned.

Part of the trouble is the failure to use words to say what they mean. People thoughtlessly speak of STV and list systems as "proportional representation" or PR. Truth to tell, list counting is not representative of the people at all. Properly speaking, party lists offer proportional partisanship. Every voter for a party candidate is assumed to be a partisan who would just as well vote for every other candidate on the same list.

Party divisions are treated as absolute. Human individuality is degraded to tribal factionalism. List counting offers no room for individual freedom or national unity of choice.

Some campaigners will claim these objections are to closed list systems. Open lists do offer some individual choice. Where these are allowed in some countries of Europe, voter input tends not to be very effective in changing the list order.

In the late 1970s, the British parliament did entertain open lists. An MP pointed out that they could elect a list candidate, in principle, even if he won no personal votes. That is because open lists are still basically for a party vote. The party vote may be big enough to win the party enough seats to put a personally unwanted candidate into parliament.

We may safely assume that was why, in the late 1990s, the new Labour government announced by dictat a closed list system for Britains European elections.

It was realised that open lists are potentially an embarrassing farce

of a concession to democracy. So, the Labour leadership opted for the oligarchic closed lists.

Of course, closed lists are still a concession to small parties, who get their share of seats for party votes. Labour so rewarded their Liberal Democrat allies with seats in the European parliament. Too often, that's all small parties care about -- seats for themselves at any damage to democracy.

Let not any one deceive you that differences between voting methods are mere details. Party list systems abolish representative democracy.

A further and fatal consequence of the list system is that if any politician wants to make a difference, he has to abandon the party fold and start a new party. The party-proportional count facilitates a lot of parties. Even the biggest may only win a fairly minor share of the total vote. The voters have no say in how these parties should combine to form a government. Coalitions can take months of wrangling behind the scenes.

This is the system and the situation in Israel. In november 2002, the Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called an election less than a day after saying it would be irresponsible. He said he had no alternative but to succumb to political blackmail from potential coalition partners.

There is something unreal about constituency boundaries in a single member system. They are always being revised (malapportioned, gerrymandered). The single member system is an anti-system of disposable constituencies of unreal communities.

Likewise, there is something unreal about party list systems. The Proportional Representation Society of Australia describes the Israeli politicians as jockeying for position with the forming, merging and discarding of parties.

In the 2013 Israeli elections, the premiers party merged with another

party list for a better chance of being the first leader asked to form a government.

Six other temporary alliances were formed in the hope of getting an extra seat from the d'Hondt higher average divisor count.

A lowly two per cent threshold still vetoed a modest 7.1% votes on 20 unsuccessful parties. An election system is supposed to elect not veto. If the threshold were called a veto, which is what it is, its undemocratic nature would be apparent. The fact that this threshold veto is a necessary contrariness for election systems like party lists or Additional (List) Members only goes to show the inadequate logic of these systems.

The level of the threshold can change the nature of the government. In 1996, the first New Zealand MMP elections gave the Association of Consumers and Taxpayers (ACT) 7 seats for 6.1% votes. But the Christian Coalition on 4.33% were denied seats, which could have gone towards a right wing coalition government.

It is widely recognised that list systems lack individual representation and make for weak government from too many party divisions. So, a compromise has been widely adopted that combines the single member system, allegedly for individual representation and strong government, with the list system, allegedly for the proportional representation especially of smaller parties.

These systems are called Additional Member Systems (AMS) or Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) systems. Typically, voters have an X-vote for a single member and an extra X-vote for a party, submitting a list of candidates.

Additional/Mixed Member system



Additional members boat.

[To top](#)

The first practical problem with combining single members with list members is to decide how many to have of each. There is no agreement on this in the world. In Britain alone, the ratio of list members is higher for the Scottish than the Welsh assembly. The Jenkins Commission advocated a yet lower level of list members for British general elections.

Why does it matter?

Well, it matters, because the relative numbers of list to single members decides whether more or less seats will be shared with smaller parties. After Japan's first Additional-members election, the

number of list members was reduced. This drastically cut the number of Communists winning list seats.

The results of the system can be fixed by changing the relative numbers of mixed members.

Lack of principle makes the amount of combination between single members and list members a bone of contention. The system cannot be stable when there is no reason why those in power shouldn't change the mixture to help keep themselves in power. This encourages a power struggle instead of getting on with government.

Some innocents think that a "purely proportional" system would solve the problem. The German Additional Member system was the first model for other countries. It has equal numbers of single and list members. There are enough list vacancies for parties with less than five per cent of the votes to be elected.

The only reason, they are not, is because of an arbitrary rule that parties with less than five per cent of the votes may not have any representation. When the Federal Democrats slipped just below this five per cent, in some of the German elections, they found themselves losing all their forty seats or so, for only slightly reduced support.

Also, there is no agreement what level the threshold should be. Different levels will bring in or push out different parties. These are either potential friends or enemies of a government. The New Zealand National party, in government, shot itself in the foot by setting a threshold just above the level of support for a party, the Christian Coalition, that was its natural ally. (Perhaps they hoped to inherit its vote.)

Threshold levels offer another means to rig the results of an additional member system.

The sheer flukes, that the threshold can turn up, are illustrated by the second New Zealand MMP election in 1999. The Greens on 4.9% votes had no seats, which was bumped up to six seats, when they crawled across the 5% threshold, on absentee and over-seas votes.

New Zealand First on 30% of votes, just 62 votes over the runner-up, in a single member constituency, gained an instant bonus of 5 party list seats. The narrowness of this particular victory might have been challenged in the courts, over-turning their wind-fall.

(PRSA Quota Notes.)

Some say: get rid of the threshold without prejudice to the party-proportional count. But there is good reason why there is not a consensus to do so. It is precisely the reason given by premier Sharon, who has to work under a highly party-proportional system. Too many small parties can hold the balance of power and hold the main parties to ransom.

The party-proportional count wont hold-up in principle. The bigger battalions feel obliged to take rather more than their partisan share. Some might think that doesnt matter much. However, the basic problem remains.

For decades after the second world war, West Germany was only a three-party system. Yet the small third party held the balance of power. The Federal Democrats, rather than the German people decided, by their choice of coalition, whether the Christian or the Social Democrats took power.

When New Zealand adopted the German system, the government was stung in the same way. Supporters of the reform have tried to make out it was an aberration, that the rogue party was punished at subsequent polls, the system has "settled down," and so forth.

Both Germany and New Zealand got no further than discussing changing from this "tail-wags-the-dog" system of additional members. It's difficult to persuade those in power, by virtue of a system, to change it.

The additional member system fails to allow the people to choose a government.

Some say this system allows voters to choose a coalition by voting for one party with ones vote for a single member and voting for its coalition partner with ones list vote. This assumes that the party of ones choice has a safe seat in ones single member constituency. For many voters this will not be true. If their first vote may be wasted, they may feel obliged to use their second vote for the same party. Their decision depends on other imponderables, such as whether their second vote will help their first party of choice to win more seats in the region, before they think of giving the second vote to another party.

AMS or MMP or the double vote (to use a third name for this system) also fails individual representation. The vote for ones single member is supposed to be a personal vote. But small party candidates could not win enough personal votes to beat the big parties. They had to rely on impersonal party votes to get in parliament. And even if big party candidates are so personally unpopular as to lose their single member constituency, they can still be elected from a high position on their party list.

The single member system has been reviled as a safe seat system. The additional member system is doubly so. The personal representation, it pretends to offer, is a mockery. Irritation, at this electoral cheat, came out in the public enquiry of the Sunderland committee on Welsh local democracy.

In sum, the additional or mixed member proportional system is badly defective in delivering choice of representation or choice of government. By reasonable standards of quality control, it should be decisively rejected.

Most people do not know that there is any other option for electoral reform.

There is.

So far, we have discussed a spot vote with a majority count (first past the post), or, a preference vote with an over-all majority count (alternative vote / run-off voting), or, a spot vote with proportional counting (party lists), or a combined system of additional members. We have not discussed the remaining possibility: a preference vote with a proportional count (the single transferable vote).

Single transferable vote (STV)



Single transferable boat.

[To top](#)

Origin of proportional representation

Proportional representation was originally invented, in the mid-nineteenth century, as a proportionally counted preference vote, by the Danish statesman Carl Andrae. In Britain, soon after, Thomas Hare independently came up with the same formula.

On the continent, the preference vote was soon abandoned by politicians who thought that the proportional count only mattered for

their parties, rather than the election of individually preferred candidates.

In English-speaking countries, the campaign for the Hare system and its development into STV, persisted. This no doubt owed to a tradition of individual freedom. Above all, it owed to the support given by John Stuart Mill, who immediately recognised the Hare proposals improved representative democracy much better than his own suggestions.

He called the reform both "proportional representation" and "personal representation" to emphasise that preferring the best individual representatives was as important as representing all portions of the nation. Mill never made the mistake of many modern electoral reformers that democracy was no more than equal treatment between political parties in an election count.

Since "Fair Votes" campaigns started in Britain and were taken up in other English-speaking countries, this fairness between the parties is what they have meant. To be fair to British Columbia Fair Votes campaign, they have said that proper representation of small parties is an important consideration but not the only one. And they have been generous in response to the British Columbian governments generous agenda for electoral reform.

Besides fairness, there is freedom to consider. After all, to "elect" means to choose-out. Voting systems should not cheat voters of a free choice or the means to put it into effect, as we saw in the previous part of this essay.

Not only fairness and freedom but also fraternity is needed. A rounded definition of democracy, as good as any, is the French republican slogan: liberty, equality, fraternity. A genuinely democratic voting system puts these principles into

practise. This is what STV does. Freedom of choice comes from being able to prefer candidates, who must win equal portions of the votes, in a multi-member constituency, before they can be elected. STV is a uniquely fraternal election system, which allows voters to rank candidates of more than one party, and Independents, who have policies in common, thus establishing degrees and kinds of national unity.

Democratic functions of STV

In a single member system, personally unpopular representatives rely on being the nominee of a party, for whom the constituency is a safe seat. With STV, there are no such cheats of the popular choice, because candidates of the same party have to compete for preferment. And only the favorite candidates of the parties with sufficient portions of support will win seats with STV in a multi-member constituency.

An STV general election has *in-built primary elections* which all the voters can take part in. This is a big improvement on primaries exclusive to party members. In a democracy, the voters right to decide, which way a nation goes politically, includes the right to decide which policy ways the parties go.

It means that parties are much less likely to be hi-jacked by small groups taking over the selection committees of the single (safe) seat system. This was the complaint against British Labour being infiltrated by Trotskyists in the nineteen seventies and eighties. And it was alleged, in the ensuing period, that more Tory selection committees were choosing candidates in favor of capital punishment.

The democrat believes it is better to let the people make their own mistakes than have "elites" make them on their behalf. This is the

wisdom that currently informs British Columbia. Long may it prosper.

The *proportional count, used with transferable voting*, is a logical continuation of an over-all majority count for a single member, requiring at least half the votes for a candidates election, which none of the other candidates can exceed. (If two candidates got half the votes each, lots would have to be drawn for the winner.)

In a two member system, two candidates each require one third of the votes, which cannot be exceeded by the remaining candidates. This gives a two-member proportional representation of two-thirds the voters.

In a three-member system, the PR is three-quarters, and so on.

This system of proportional counting is called the Droop quota, and it is standard to STV.

Party lists systems and Additional (party list) member systems have no agreed proportional count. They have a chaos of methods for sharing out the seats for party votes, which more or less favor large or small parties. This is another source of bias in the result, to those mentioned in the previous part.

There are technical objections to both quota methods and divisor methods of conducting a party proportional count. The more basic objection is that they impose a dogmatic rationalism on the voters presumed to be all-or-nothing partisans, whose vote may count for any one on a party list, once they have voted for a party candidate. Or, worse, the voters are given only a vote for a party, denying the right to elect individual representatives given in the Sankey Declaration and the following UN Declaration on Human Rights.

As a matter of fact, people are not blind partisans, except in the most extreme instances of tyrannical disrespect for human beings as individuals. Party lists ignore the evidence of peoples wishes. Party

list bosses only allow the voters to tell them what they want to hear, namely that the people are ideological conformists to party lines. STV allows voters to prefer candidates on purely partisan lines, if they wish. Proportional representation enables proportional partisanship. But the reverse is not true, as shown by party lists.

The transferable vote allows voters to prefer candidates of more than one party, enabling supporters of one party to say which other party they would most like to see in coalition with their most preferred team. STV allows the voters to express a degree and kind of national unity, on which *a governing majority* can be based. The public become the stabilising arbiters of policy negotiations.

This effective method of allowing the public to form a government is another essential attribute of a democratic voting method unique to STV.

This fraternal principle of STV offers a degree of preference to friendly candidates across social and political divides. A party vote only counts for some manifesto package, peculiarly relevant to leaders or activists.

A transferable vote works by electing individuals, with all the attributes, political or social, relevant to the voters. In particular, candidates, who agree on a single issue can be preferred. STV may act like a referendum taking place within the general election. Parties are less able to jointly ignore popular issues or force policy dilemmas on the public.

As the proportional election of individual candidates, STV does not discriminate against Independents. Like them, party candidates have to earn their portion of the votes thru personal preference. Because they depend on the public rather than their party boss, party candidates can be more independent on particular issues. With the list system, the party candidate may need only a sufficiently high

ranking on one preference vote, that of his party boss ordering the list to pre-empt the election. Such privileged candidates become party servants rather than public servants.

The *proportional count of a preference vote* is what makes STV fulfill the above-described requirements of a democratic voting system, and also allows it to work for all kinds of election, political or professional, and at every level of government. (In Eire, STV is used at every level of government, from local to European elections.)

The lack, of preference or proportion or both, makes other voting systems unworkable at some level, despite the low standards of election law. These short-comings are disguised by the much wider use of party list systems, in particular the fashion in additional or mixed member systems. But no system (other than STV) is used at every level of government.

It is not generally recognised that STV has a role to play in *elections for a single vacancy*.

Take the French presidential elections by the Second Ballot. In the first round, the socialist candidate had so little personal support that the National Front candidate Le Pen came second, and won the right to a second round with Chirac, the front-runner.

In the second round, Le Pen won no further support and Chirac took some eighty per cent of the votes.

That landslide victory only represented Chirac popular, relative to Le Pen. It gave little idea of the main blocs of French public opinion.

If the successive rounds of the presidential elections were conducted with a proportional count of even up to five rounds, it is doubtful the national front candidate would have got beyond the first round, because that party did not achieve a fifth of the votes.

With the Droop quota, the first round could require four candidates to each win one fifth of the votes. The second round would then require

three of those four to each win one quarter the votes. The third round sees two candidates each win one third the votes. In the fourth and final round, the candidate, with over half the votes, is sought. Such a way of using STV is not without its critics, even among STV supporters, but it would be a huge improvement on the Second Ballot.

Notes:

My other chapters give other information on voting method, including examples of STV elections effecting primaries, governing majorities, informal referendums, and the representation of social as well as party political minorities. Also discussed, in places, is why other voting systems dont work at every government level, etc.

In his Autobiography, John Stuart Mill tells how he started a radical journal to try to change the climate of British political opinion. Looking back, he was realistic about the limited influence of reasoned persuasion. He guessed that all he decisively promoted was a democratic constitution for Canada. I thought this justified calling Mill a founding father of Canadian democracy. (Not every one agreed with me.)

The illustrations come from R M Ballantyne childrens novel *Hudson Bay*. They are by Bayard and other artists, based on sketches by the author.

Best wishes to the citizens and government of British Columbia in their democratic endeavors.

15 june 2003.
(a little more, in april 2015).



British Columbia Citizens Assembly puts on its thinking cap.

[To top](#)

Citizens Assemblies of Canada choose a voting system.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Links to sections:

Introduction.

[Electoral reform](#) in Canada.

British Columbia Citizens Assembly: [Educational purpose](#).

The considered [voting methods](#):

Unitive tactical election: The simple majority system / First past the post.

Divisive tactical election: [Party Lists](#).

Cross-purposes (Unitive and Divisive tactical) election: [Mixed Member Proportional](#) / Additional Member System.

MMP: How the majority counting frustrates the proportional counting.

MMP: How the proportional counting frustrates the majority counting.

The [alternative vote](#) / Instant run-off voting.

The single [transferable vote](#).

Technical appendix: STV evolves.



Citizens Assembly beavers on.

Introduction.

"In British Columbia, which is a couple of years ahead of Ontario on this issue, a citizens' assembly has just recommended a whacko system called the single transferable vote."

Ian Urquhart, political columnist, "Toronto Star."

Reportedly, a reporter suggested the assembly was "a bit of a fiasco."

The reply was: Not necessarily. BC is BC.

At this, everyone "guffawed with great gusto."

To say "guffawed" would suffice.

Superficial and misleading coverage of voting methods are nothing new. Something of this view of a "wild west" may be attributed to the wild distortions of a crude and obsolete electoral system that can give a political party a national majority of seats (usually not votes) with hardly any seats won in western Canada, tho this does not represent the balance of votes cast.

For instance, in 1980, the last Trudeau government won only two seats in Manitoba and none in the other three western provinces. That is for votes ranging from over 22 per cent to nearly 25 per cent in Manitoba. In British Columbia, over 41 per cent votes won the Progressive Conservatives 16 seats. Over 35 per cent won the NDP 12 seats. In the Yukon, the Liberals 37 per cent was greater than the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democrats, both with 31 per cent, who took 2 and 1 seats, respectively.

The BC Citizens Assembly final report does what I dont do so well. It builds a picture of how STV, the single transferable vote might be expected to improve the every-day practise of politics.

The assembly assessment has its feet on the ground. Nothing could be further from the truth than any innuendo that BC citizens are somehow far out politicly, as well as geographicly, from the center of things in eastern Canada.

The simple majority system has been the thing that is. And such things tend to go unquestioned.

When young, I was tired of having to read-up even on voting, which I thought I knew all about.

I have no difficulty in understanding the poor response to random requests to join a citizens assembly on voting method. I was a natural non-respondent.

All the electoral complacency of the day found its way into an essay I was set. Half way thru, I reluctantly decided that I would have to glance at a book or two on the subject. I was lucky that included JFS Ross, "Elections and Electors," one of the great works. Even this crammer realised that the simple majority system is a stump compared to the tree of transferable voting.

Then, I looked to ecology for understanding society. When the environmental movement got going, I wanted to be a part of it. I hoped it would bring a new politics of scientific detachment, for solving world problems of wilderness and wild-life conservation and human health.

I still think the Greens are closest to realising that radical ills require radical remedies. But some of their parties have been ironically partisan. Without effective elections, political and economic, they would be too much like a re-run of state socialism.

Anyway, I realised that the environment was already a well-supported cause, with abler experts than I would ever make. The Press were soon doing a reasonable job of conveying the scale of environmental abuse to the public.

In contrast, there seemed much more work to be done before democratic method would become anything like general knowledge. So, I decided to study voting method, as well as economic democracy including an occupational second chamber.

(I recommend an STV elected vocational second chamber to be included in any plans for democratic renewal, such as those initiated by Ontario government.)

Some learn-nothing responses to electoral reform have proved more tenacious than my own complacency, re-assuring me that I answered a necessary calling.

Electoral reform in Canada.



Every household to receive the BC CA report.

[To top](#)

British Columbia has revived the classical democracy of ancient Athens, whereby the citizens were chosen by lot to take part in public affairs. Meanwhile, Ontario is the next Canadian province to put popular participation back at the heart of politics. British Columbia was just the first of the provinces to get in on the act of changing the voting system.

Prince Edward Island resorted to a commission to prefer the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system (as they were less sure about STV). If MMP is approved in a referendum in 2005, they claim this

will make them the first Canadian province in modern times to use proportional elections. It matters most not to be first but to be right. Act in haste and repent at leisure.

What happened to the Island citizens studied choice of reform?

The Yukon government sent an observer to the BC citizens assembly, to make a recommendation. This is also the job of a committee of the parliament of Canada.

The Technical Report of the British Columbia Citizens Assembly details the organisation that went into running the first citizens assembly. This will help future bodies repeating this experiment.

The Quebec government intends to introduce MMP. Their reformers want the government to make it more proportional.

Straight away, this shows the dilemma of a mixed system of conflicting counts, part simple majority (in single member constituencies) and part party proportional (from party lists of candidates). MMP is not so much a system as a running quarrel between party monopolies against party share-outs.

In Quebec, 1973, the simple majority system gave a Liberal majority, on 55 per cent of the votes, 102 seats to 8 seats. In 1976, this changed into a parti Quebecois majority of 69 to 41. PQ won 63 per cent of the seats for 41 per cent of the votes, up from 30 per cent votes winning 6 seats.

In 1979 in the Electoral Reform Society journal, "Representation," Enid Lakeman said of the Quebec government Green Paper (consultative document) and the Federal government task force report on constitutional issues including electoral reform:

"Both are quite extraordinary documents, which I have felt obliged to criticise in letters to their authors. One would think that a Canadian body set up to consider possible alternatives to that country's

present electoral system would as a matter of course consider Canadian experience of other systems, but no; there is not even a passing reference to STV in Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton or the alternative vote in Alberta..."

"Both working parties seem to have been aware that it is desirable to give fair representation to such groups as French- and English-speaking Canadians, Indians, Eskimos (Innuits), etc., but completely unaware of the single transferable vote as a means of achieving this. They have allowed themselves to be attracted by the West German mixed system, without taking account of the fact that it gives proportional representation only to parties. It cannot possibly enable Indians to elect Indian representatives unless they set themselves up as a separate Indian party and that is surely not to be desired."

In Belgium, the parties not only have their own lists but these lists have to be split into lists for French speaking and Flemish speaking candidates. In short, list systems, including the German hybrid system, can only express differences as crude divisions, weakening each other by competing for an X-vote.

In contrast, transferable voting can also be a force for individuality, unity and strength. It recognises that divisions are not absolute but a matter of more or less difference, that is more or less bridgable by transferring ones votes from individual candidates, one has most in common with, to the next preferred candidates. STV makes compromise and co-operation possible, tho it does not and cannot enforce it.

STV doesn't have to have lists for French or English speaking candidates in Canada. French speaking voters only have to prefer candidates of their own language and STV proportional election of preferred candidates then ensures Francophone proportional

representation in parliament.

What is more, separatist voters in Quebec can prefer the separatists and French-speaking federalist voters can prefer the French speaking candidates of their own persuasion. Both persuasions can prefer French-speaking candidates of any party or none. And they can express a preference between other linguistic groups of candidates of whatever parties.

Similar considerations apply to English or any other ethnic group.

One shouldn't forget that the basic advantage of STV is that the voters are allowed to elect the candidates they most prefer.

Obviously, we want our own group to be properly represented. For example, women may prefer women candidates, from the candidates of their most preferred party, maybe then the men, then perhaps the women from their next preferred party, and so on.

However, one can prefer the best candidates, that one thinks will do the most for the people they are serving, with or without regard to affiliation by party, culture, race or class etc.

According to the Fair Vote Canada website, the current Quebec government proposal of MMP would be without a second X-vote for a party list.

If there was to be any reference to public choice, this would imply a best losers system.

Small parties would have their proportional share of seats for votes given to their best losing candidates, second, third or even fourth past the post, if they didn't win a fair share of seats from first past the post results.

Hence, single member constituencies can have one or two (even three) additional members and be smaller than other constituencies with no additional members.

Essentially, a Best Losers MMP shows why a transferable vote is necessary. The simple fact is that the most preferred candidates cannot be elected without giving the voters a preference vote and without those preferred candidates being equitably elected on a proportional count.

Leaving orders of election to the vagaries of plurality counting in a single member system opens not so much a ballot box as a Pandora box.

In Britain, The Hansard Society proposed, in the Blake report, Best Losers MMP, which they called the Additional Members System (AMS) in 1976.

Electoral reform Society Robert Newland called it "botched."

Constitutional expert, Vernon Bogdanor called it too anomalous for further serious consideration.

Scottish and Welsh politicians both had second thoughts after introducing, as Quebec government intends, MMP. Neither could these two Keltic countries agree on what proportion of list members to have as members of their parliaments. But then, countries do not agree, even with themselves, on that.

Scotland decided to turn to STV for local elections, after adopting MMP for national elections. (To a lesser extent, so did New Zealand.) The Kerley report and the Sunderland report (both reviewed in my sequel book) recommended STV for local elections in Scotland and Wales, respectively.

Then, the Richard Commission recommended the Welsh Assembly change from MMP to STV. Dissatisfaction with MMP in Scotland also set in motion a review of the voting method for Scottish national elections. The former Speaker, David Steel spoke out for MMP to be replaced by STV.

Some politicians are realising that a bad electoral system is bad for the political system, and not just some of the parties compared to the others.

In 2003, the British Columbia government randomly chose 160 members of the public for a Citizens Assembly, to be a representative sample of the people. Half were women. The Liberal government accepted that political parties were under a conflict of interest in deciding an electoral reform. Voting method is supposed to be in the public interest but different methods favor different parties.

There followed "ten months of study, research and debate" with 50 public hearings and 1603 written submissions. (All references, in this chapter, to numbered submissions, are with respect to the British Columbia Citizens Assembly.)

The premier Gordon Campbell, on his first visit to the assembly, thanked its members for their great gift to public life. An information office would be set up and he encouraged British Columbians to get to know about the recommended system and debate it. The government and cabinet remained neutral.

A referendum would be held in the following May, 2005. Existing BC legislation, however, requires a 60% majority and a wide spread of support among the Ridings.

The Liberal government itself would have been two per cent short of a 60% victory requirement.



Sailing thru the referendum.

British Columbia Citizens Assembly: Educational purpose.

[To top](#)

The chair, Jack Blaney plainly regarded the Citizens Assembly as a wonderful event. I'm sure it was deserving of his highest praise. The assembly might have been plunged into the old exclusive politics of partisan self interest. It is to the credit of the BC parties, except perhaps one, that they did show restraint. Their silence was more eloquent than the odd partys propagandising.

In 2002, the BC Greens decided to canvass for a referendum on their favored voting system, the mixed member proportional system (MMP). Other reformers resisted this attempt, to pre-empt the pledge of the majority-elected Liberals, as a "hi-jack" of electoral reform in favor of the wishes of a small party. This take-over bid was as bad as ruling parties who monopolise electoral power thru existing rules. However, the so-called "Free your vote" campaign didnt obtain the

required large number of signatures (250,000) for their MMP Initiative.

A constitutional reform requires a broad agreement as to the rules of the political game. Without that, there can be no basis for co-operation.

Some reformers urged that government could never be trusted to keep its word. Even so, members of Fair Vote BC, that included reform members of all parties and none, noted that the government was implementing a time-table. They welcomed the unprecedented generosity of the government proposals and stopped campaigning while the assembly was in session.

The citizens assembly was formed into discussion groups. Anyone, who has under-gone this process, wont be surprised that members felt their individual points of view were not adequately represented by summary reports of a spokesman to the full assembly. Eventually, people had to be allowed to have their own say.

My experience confirms a friends (Dorothy Cowlin), that small groups "pull all different ways," until most members realise this isnt getting anywhere. Usually, they give up and let the most assertive person take over.

And conventional wisdom, in the name of all, mocks individual viewpoints.

But the discussion group members seem to have realised the importance of what they were doing and not given up distinctive contributions of their own. The groups discussions were valued for learning but not for group decision-making.

Seeing the proceedings of the Citizens Assembly werent going their way, the Green leadership urged people to say not only that they

wanted MMP but that they didnt want the rival system of proportional representation called STV (single transferable vote).

The effect of this incitement was a flurry of messages, to the Citizens Assembly website, to the effect: "We want MMP. We dont want STV." My favorites among these was one that urged the assembly to ignore STV as it will take forever to count. And another message that warned darkly of the consequences of the assembly not listening to their wishes.

This "spamming," that an MMP supporter admitted afterwards was bad tactics, staged a little submissions "referendum" to pre-empt the real referendum.

A BC Green supporter, who attended some Green party meetings, was disgusted by the superficial way these electoral reform resolutions were achieved.

Anyone who has been at a political rally, perhaps, has some idea of how attending crowds too easily resemble a steered herd.

Classical psychologists, like Carl Jung, observed that crowds can behave not so much as individuals but their lowest common denominator.

Why didnt this party of enthusiasts have the courage of their convictions, and leave MMP to prevail on its own alleged merits with a representative sample of the people?

It didnt seem to occur to the Green leadership that their activism could invalidate the independence of the citizens assembly verdict, had it gone their way. Supporters of the present system could have taken legal action against the one-sided interference with assembly deliberations. Whether successful or no, this would have thrown in doubt the legitimacy of the assembly referendum recommendation.

But for the (as I'm told) "fanatical" opposition among Greens, the Assembly vote, in favor of STV, most probably would have been

even closer to unanimity than it was.

An eye-witness, of the final debate to choose MMP or STV, said that it was conducted with courtesy. Civilised values were inculcated in assembly procedure, such as "criticise ideas not the people who hold them."

Overwhelming majorities in the assembly did vote for STV against First past the post, and voted for a referendum on whether to adopt STV in British Columbia.

After the Assembly decision, the current Green leader opposed the decision of the independent citizens who took a year out of their lives to study the matter. For combining ingratitude with wrong-headedness, this hubris takes some beating. (Some members, such as the current deputy leader, do support STV.)

The fact is that the assembly recommendation is another version of proportional representation, from which the Greens have more to gain than any other party. New Zealand Greens and Scottish Greens have been campaigning successfully for STV in local government.

It may be worth dispelling an objection that the Citizens Assembly was too much influenced by "STV people."

The Citizens Assembly was a free parliament not steered by party whips. The assembly was allowed to decide for itself, without being told who to be influenced by. They were not sheep who chose the wrong shepherd.

It was further objected that the assembly's basic text book was by a known STV supporter, David Farrell.

Go back a generation, and the standard work on voting systems was by Enid Lakeman, an irrepressible campaigner for STV.

Go back another generation to JFS Ross and you have another world reputation on voting methods, who campaigned unequivocally for STV. And so on, to John Humphries, Catherine Helen Spence, back to John Stuart Mill, the great philosopher of science.

Doug Woodward of Ontario, also mentioning Kenneth Carty and Dr Taagepera, says that it's notorious that STV-PR is popular among electoral experts and asks: What does this tell us?

Another of the "STV people" mentioned was British Columbian Nick Loenen. He was one of the nine people chosen by the assembly to make a final case for their recommendations. His Citizens Assembly website submission, number 35, shows how well qualified was this founder member of Canadian electoral reform.

He also wrote a book for proportional representation. His many talks to fellow citizens convinced him of the need to compromise, by allowing some retention of single member constituencies in very sparsely populated areas.

But it would be truer to say that the citizens assembly led Nick Loenen than that Nick Loenen led the citizens assembly. Receiving nearly a years input on all electoral options is not like receiving an evening talk in a hall. The citizens assembly decision, for STV in multi-member constituencies, did compromise, recommending a few two member constituencies (giving PR of at least two-thirds the constituents) in the most sparsely populated areas. But they didnt go so far as the Loenen compromise.

Mr Loenen was acknowledged in the technical report as one of the movers for a citizens assembly, which does further justice to his reform role.

The considered voting methods.

[To top](#)

My previous chapter, "British Columbia chooses a voting system," reviewed the main voting methods, in anticipation of the Citizens Assembly investigation. It was written before I knew foreigners would be allowed to join in the debate. Subsequent debates in other provinces of Canada may resume where the assembly left off. I've tried to write a sufficiently different review, to make both worth reading, and also bear in mind further things that were said in BC.

Unitive tactical election: The simple majority system/First past the post.



First past the (wood) post.

First past the post is well known for forcing tactical voting between the two front running party candidates. I call simple majority system a tactical election. (Canadians use the term, "strategic voting.") It pressures voters to eliminate all but two choices of party candidate, as "wasted votes." In turn, only one of these main parties wins a majority of seats. Thus, unity, of a somewhat forced and exaggerated kind, prevails.

First Past the Post institutes a struggle for dominance. The lesser of the two main parties resists this dominance thru achieving local preponderance, as a power base from which to extend support for national office.

Labour, as an urban party, could take advantage of its concentrated support to obtain majorities in single districts. From that spring-board, Harold Wilson said, and James Callaghan repeated that Labour is now the natural party of government. This was a more diplomatic way of saying "We are the masters now," to quote a minister after the Labour post-war election victory. In other words, Labour aspired merely to replace the feudal Conservative party, as the agent of a forced unity.

Eventually, other means of concentrated support, such as local patriotisms, may facilitate further strong-holds against the same old duopoly. Thus, a forced unity, thru offering a minimum choice of two parties, may have to tolerate more competition, in the long run.

Tho, in the 2004 Canadian federal election, the largest party, the Liberals could only manage less than 44% of the seats with less than 37% of the votes.

Moreover, the turn-out of 60.5% was the lowest since 1898 or since confederation.

In British Columbia, in 1996, the simple majority system won the New Democratic Party (NDP) a virtual majority of 39 out of 79 seats with just under 40% of the votes. The Liberals with nearly 42% of the votes won only 33 seats. The term "simple" majority system really means it is not even a majority system. The Liberals promised to review electoral reform, if they came to power.

The 2001 election gave the Liberals 77 out of 79 seats with only 58% of the votes. The NDP with 22% of the votes took the remaining 2

seats. Thus, they were virtually wiped out after the previous two elections, in which they held majority governments with just 40% of the votes. The Green party with over 12% of the votes took no seats, nor did the other parties.

The pioneer reformer, JFS Ross remarked that persisting with a faulty electoral system was like using a faulty scales and compared it to tampering with weights and measures. When he said that, Britain, like Canada at one time, was close to being a partisan class system. (This is the nineteenth century setting of Margaret Atwood novel, *Alias Grace*.) Labour and Tory put up with being sold short by each other, as the simple majority system robbed most the smaller parties of seats in proportion to their votes.

The duopoly of Tory and Labour Britain were occasionally miffed with each other when one lost on more votes but less seats than the other. Labour has formed about ten governments, but lost the 1951 election on its biggest ever share of the total vote, 48.5%, half a per cent more than the Tories, at 48% votes, who won 50.5% of seats. Labours two and a half per cent increase in votes, on the 1950 election, didnt prevent them from being thrown out of office.

Population sizes change relatively rapidly in single member constituencies. To maintain equal representation, the boundaries are always having to be re-drawn. The single member system destabilizes local identity, like a "permanent revolution" against permanent neighborhoods. The single member system is not the system of localities but the systematic disruption of localities.

Urban parties benefit from population depletion in city centers thru winning more seats from fewer voters.

In Britain, in 1979, the Tories equalised single-member constituencies, with sometimes rather scant regard for natural community boundaries. This is a rare instance of their practical

regard for a sort of equality, one enough to benefit only themselves. In other words, the principle of equal constituencies showed their regard for a sort of proportional representation, that between single member constituencies, and no more.

It was wrong of them to be against proportional representation except in so far as it could be made to benefit themselves. There's no doubt about it. PR should be introduced properly. "Properly" is the operative word.

For their turns in power, Labour drags its feet over boundary changes. For this reason, a Labour vote will count more than any other at the next British general election, expected in 2005. That is a sin of omission, allowing a drift to inequality or disproportion to win more seats for ones own side.

In any case, the single member system is the most inequitable with regard to observing community boundaries. Say, the required equal representation is 60,000 constituents. Then the size of constituency must rationally be allowed to go up to a possible 80,000, with regard to the actual size of a local community. Above 80,000, it is more rational to have two constituencies of over 40,000. This way, no constituency, having regard to local community populations, varies by more than 20,000 votes above or below the required average.

The single member system, if it is to pay due attention to the variations in size of local population units, must have larger than average constituencies that are up to half as well represented as the smaller constituencies. There is no proportional representation within the single member constituencies, also PR is least marked between single member constituencies.

The single member system actually least respects local wholeness, under the condition of equal constituencies.

In 1970, for example, the boundary revisions proposal took 40 people six years work.

This is unnecessary with an STV multi-member system. You just change the number of seats, more or less, per constituency, to keep up with population changes.

In fact, it is the single member system, and not (as alleged) STV, that is "too complicated."

Under instructions from the 1979 Tory government, the Boundary Commission over-rode protests, up and down the country, against wards being removed from their constituencies of interest. Ingenious attempts at equalising constituencies, that happened to fail, included a do-nut constituency completely surrounding an inner city constituency.

A pie-missing-slices constituency was the city of York, which had to fight to keep two of its wards.

York probably should have been given two seats. This would have meant one of the seats for the opposition party.

Scarborough protested in vain against two of its wards being excised. The Boundary Commission offered their sympathy and excused themselves by saying they were only following government instructions for constituency equalisation. Yet the similar cases of York and Scarborough received different treatment.

The boundary changes boosted, to some twenty per cent, Tory inflated majorities of seats for votes, which stayed in the low forty per cents for several elections.

For a country as a customer, this is like making a purchase for 40 currency units and being short-changed 20.

The Tories accidentally-on-purpose self-aggrandised thru constituency equalisation. This is merely an equalisation of

patronage, for unequalising representation in their favor. Hypocrits can malapportion by equalising constituencies.

Malapportionment in South Australia made its Liberal and Country League leader the longest serving premier of any Commonwealth country. The excuse was the sparse rural population were in need of extra representation.

Malapportionment is institutionalised in US elections but the Australian media only brought it to public attention in the case of the 2013 Malaysia elections. The Barisan National party "won" with 47.4% votes against the united Opposition 50.9%. The government 133 seats averaged 40,838 voters. The 89 opposition seats averaged 66,277 voters.
(PRSA Quota Notes.)

As voters rebel from a choice of two parties, to make several parties serious contenders, election wins increasingly become a lottery. This is the classic scenario for electoral reform, which explains why most of Europe switched from a majority count to a proportional count. English-speaking countries are all more or less in the throes of this change.

The fortunes of Canadian parties have been more volatile than in Britain. Simple majority tends to soar and crash parties, making some Canadian politicians like political refugees from the artificial disasters of an erratic system.

Divisive tactical election: Party Lists.



The party whips up a list.

[To top](#)

Party List systems usually have been rejected out of hand in English-speaking countries, because they are lists of candidates chosen by each party, rather than candidates elected in local constituencies. The public has no say about which people, behind their party facades, get into parliament.

In his book, "Re-building Russia," Solzhenitsyn observed that Lenin, as future dictator, approved party lists, because they are top-down systems that regiment the candidates and the voters to a party agenda, without individual freedom of choice. The voters only can say who they wish to be indoctrinated by, or which side of the class war they will join, and so forth.

In his direct manner, Solzhenitsyn pointed out that parties stand for a "part" not the whole country.

In 1997, a closed list system was introduced by the new Labour government for British Euro-elections. For the first time in their history, British voters could only vote for a party and not individuals. Tho, it meant that Liberals, the UK Independence Party and the Greens won proportional shares of seats.

More parties are being founded, especially left wing, such as Respect, which did "surprisingly well," tho winning no seats. Vanessa and Corin Redgrave started a human rights party. More split voting is in the offing. For instance, a Green socialist party in Yorkshire regional constituency threatened to prevent the Greens getting a big enough proportion of votes for a seat in that region.

To the Right of Tories and UKIP, the British National Party made inroads. Like the casualty counters in some war of attrition, partisans of the Tories claimed that they had won, in 2004, with their simple majority of 27.4% of the votes (only in England and Wales).

The party list system encourages a proliferation of parties, either to start a list themselves, if they cannot get high on another partys list, or to prevent some other party getting a seat by splitting their vote. The system is eminently manipulable.

Hence, I have termed party lists "divisive tactical elections." List systems force division upon the people, in contrast to the simple majority system forcing unity upon the people.

In the 1989 Euro-elections, the British Green party became the most popular in Europe with nearly 15% of the votes. Then, they got rid of their popular leaders, like Jonathan Porritt, and sank down to a few

per cent. They did not recover popular support, even after the list system was introduced, giving them a few seats.

STV might have saved the fortunes of Green politics by allowing voters to prefer its popular leaders, even had they only been able to stand as Independent Greens, over-ruling the activists. Because STV is not merely a count of proportional partisanship, it does not discriminate against Independents. STV proportionally represents individuals from all groups or none.

Had a so-called proportional list system been used in Ulster, the Irish nationalist vote would have been split between SDLP and Sinn Fein lists. But with STV, republican voters could transfer their votes between republican candidates, so that the most preferred among them takes one of the three Northern Ireland seats in the European parliament.

A list system only gives PR between parties but STV also gives PR across parties.

Neither do list systems give PR within parties. The British Labour government recommended but failed to pass a Regional List for the first British Euro-elections. It was suspected that the Left favored this open list system, because more right wing candidates on the Labour list would have their votes split, letting in the left wingers first past the post on the party list.

Only STV, being the consistently proportional election of preferred individual candidates, gives PR within, as well as across and between parties, and indeed PR without parties or any other official groups.

Small parties sometimes claim STV is "not proportional enough." This implies that STV doesn't impose proportional partisanship on the people, by making everyone vote for a party list of candidates, with no say as to the individuals on them. They really meant STV isn't

partisan enough. Or, STV doesn't make the people follow the partisans, the doctrinaires.

Actually, STV is the only system that is comprehensively proportional, if not highly so, in small constituencies. But the narrow party proportionality of a list system is also only as proportional as the number of seats, in its multi-member constituency, permits.

Former Eire coalition premier Brunton made a case to the European Union, that STV be used for Euro-elections in general.

The only reason why the list system need be discussed at all for Canada, or other English-speaking countries, is that many reformers or small parties think party lists are alright as an Additional Members System to the single member system. This is sometimes also called Mixed Member Proportional system.

Two wrongs don't make a right. MMP supporters would have us believe that a system, of simple majorities, they regard as unacceptable on its own, becomes benign in combination with another system, of party lists, also regarded as unacceptable on its own.

Cross-purposes (unitive and divisive tactical) election: MMP/AMS.



Additional Member System

[To top](#)

The Mixed Member Proportional system (MMP) is an aggravation of the two systems, by binding them to each other. MMP could hardly be more confusing of purpose. Many reformers have been averse to confer it upon their fellow citizens. As the name implies, MMP combines two different kinds of members of parliament. Some members are elected by simple majority vote in single member constituencies. Other members are elected, from lists, in proportion

to votes for their parties. A monopolistic constituency system is combined with a seat-sharing list system.

This hybrid system fights itself because the single member system was designed to give one of two main parties a government majority by winning the most seats. But the other system is designed to give as many parties a share in government as the votes warrant.

The simple majority system favored decisiveness at the expense of inclusion of more parties. The party proportional system favored more inclusion at the expense of a simpler decision.

MMP combines a disagreement of principle as to whether parties should monopolise or share government. It is like trying to play a game in which there is an underlying squabble about the rules. The point of having a constitution is that there is a basic agreement in society about how things are done, about procedures or means, that need not be challenged, so that ends may be achieved.

The mixed member proportional system turns a conflict of principle into a power struggle between party monopoly or coalition, whichever suits the various contenders for power.

MMP: How the majority counting frustrates the proportional counting.

Many reformers think that MMP is really a proportional system rather than a majority system. But it can never be made to stick as such, any more than it can be made to stick as a majority system. This is shown by the fact that there is no agreement in the world, or within the United Kingdom, about the proportion of MPs to be constituency MPs or list MPs. The mix of mixed members need only be what suits

the prevailing parties.

Quebecs quarrel has been mentioned.

Even when it is agreed that the system be fully party proportional with half the MPs as list MPs, there is usually an excluding clause against parties with less than a few per cent of the national vote. There is not even agreement on how high this threshold should be: four or five per cent, more or less? (The BC citizens assembly model set a 3 per cent threshold.)

The difference may not seem much but it can be decisive for how many parties are represented and even which of the big parties forms a coalition government. Even in this marginal way of the threshold, the majority principle can come in thru the back door of MMP and make itself felt crucially and arbitrarily.

So, majority coalitions formed may be an accident of the level of threshold. In any case, MMP does not guarantee that any one, of a possible number of majority combinations between parties, is the peoples preferred coalition to form a government.

One might guess that the German coalition of Social Democrats and Greens was the most preferred combination. On the other hand, one perceives that the simple majority requirement, for half the MPs from constituencies, has aligned German politics into a simplistic left-right division, with one large party, and small party confined to the lists, on either side of the divide.

The disproportionate power, that a fully proportional MMP gives small parties in forming a government, sometimes leads to a tempering of party proportionality, so that the system is still weighted in favor of the bigger parties. Britains Jenkins Commission claimed they decided not to make their recommendation too proportional, so as not to erode too much the probability of one-party majority governments.

It did not occur to these social engineers that, in a democracy, it is the people who should decide how monistic or pluralistic they want their governments, rather than have some bias in the electoral system decide it for them. Mixed systems impose more or less unity and division upon the voters, rather than allow the voters to express how much unity and division there is among them.

Ultimately, MMP could be manipulated to squeeze out the small parties who hold the balance of power. If the two main parties polarise their society with extreme policy differences, they can make it not worth many peoples while to vote for any but the two main parties with which their interests are aligned. To vote for a small party is to risk its coalition negotiations letting in the more threatening, of the big two parties, to any given voter. Indeed, the voters may simply desire to "cut out the middle-man party" from deciding for them which of the main two parties forms the government.

MMP fans over-look that MMP keeps small parties small. Typicly, small parties remain the additional list member stooges to the two main parties, whose position they can not challenge in the constituencies. Stooges, tho they may be, they remain an indispensable pain in the neck for the big parties by being able to switch coalition allegiances, regardless of the voters wishes, if their demands are not met.

James Gilmour, of the FairShare campaign, mentions (in submission 1332) suggestions in Scotland of the artificial splitting of a main party into two, so the second vote for a party list, gains them list seats they would not otherwise have:

"the use of two votes in MMP opens the way for some new forms of tactical voting that can completely pervert the intention of obtaining party PR. If large numbers of electors vote for the constituency

candidates of one party and vote for the party list of a closely aligned party, that two-party block can very readily take a disproportionately large share of the seats in the Legislature."

MMP: How the proportional counting frustrates the majority counting.

[To top](#)

Some reformers have not realised how proportional counting can be frustrated by MMP. Opponents of reform have seen more easily how majority counting is frustrated by proportional counting. This undoes the whole point of a decisive majority result, that tells you which party forms a government, making cliff-hanger elections less likely. The artificial majorities in seats won by one party are replaced usually by no one party having a majority of the votes that would give them a majority of the seats.

There is more to it than that. The existence of a party proportional count encourages splinter parties, instead of factions coming together to compete as potential majority parties, that offer the public a decisive choice of government.

The proportional count not only frustrates the majority count in deciding a government. The party list elections also frustrate the supposedly personal vote for a single member in a constituency. Many single member constituencies are safe seats, because a party could elect "a beer glass" there. But should the unthinkable happen and the safe seat be breached, there is still the placement of the same candidate high on his party's list to ensure his election as an "additional member." The German Chancellor Kohl was saved in this way by the doubly safe seat MMP system.

Moreover, James Gilmour says that in Scotland, and also New Zealand, the losing candidates in the single member constituencies, who are still elected on their party lists, tend to set up office in the constituency they lost. Second or even third and fourth past the post candidates compete as representatives for the constituents attentions even tho they received no representative mandate to do so.

What we see, with MMP, is an unprincipled wavering back and forth between degrees of party majority and degrees of party proportional government.

If anyone thinks the above considerations against MMP are empty theory, there is the rare example of a British Columbian citizen, Paul Brenneisen, in submission 1367, giving his experience of the German system in use since the end of world war two:

"Having lived with the results of the mixed member proportional [MMP] system in Germany I can only emphasize the importance of not implementing it in BC."

"Since many years the following happens:

There are 2 big political parties, Conservatives and Social Democrats. They each have a firm voter base of roughly 35% each. Furthermore there are 2 smaller parties, Liberals and Green Party which often are only able to just jump over the 5% hurdle which entitles them to send representatives to Parliament."

"None of the 2 big parties can form the Government alone and need one or 2 of the smaller Parties as a partner. Plain blackmail and continuous threats of leaving the Government block are regular occurrences. Needless to say all well intended and necessary

legislature is watered down to the point where nobody even recognizes the original ideas."

"In addition a lot of the representatives sent to Parliament are selected from lists and are not voted for directly. This becomes necessary to allow for the balance in the popular vote compared to the majority vote. A very bad idea since they do not represent a riding and can't therefore be held accountable directly by their constituents. In fact nobody knows up front which people and how many are selected from these lists until the ballots have been counted. Those seats are rather like patronage appointments. There is no way to get rid of bad politicians under this system or even get rid of a bad party all together since there is always a part of the population who will vote for them no matter what."

"So what if votes fall by the wayside because only the front runner in each riding gets to Parliament. This will happen in the mixed system as well if your party of choice does not reach the 5% hurdle. Or if there is no minimum percentage required we will end up like the Parliament in the German Weimar Republic between the wars. Just imagine dozens of parties represented in Victoria..."

"I sooner have the advantage of a Government which actually is able to make decisions and follows through than the endless bickering and horse-trading required in many European countries."

It is true that Mr Brenneisen wanted no electoral change. But then, he doesn't mention any other possibilities. Generally speaking, continental Europeans only know of party list systems as "PR." If STV has been heard of, it is often assumed to be the same kind of animal as a party list count.

It would be interesting to know how many members of the British Columbia Citizens Assembly had heard of, or knew much about, STV before they started their study of electoral methods.

Very few, I would guess, from a lack of knowledge ascertained in the general population.

The technical report, which is full of statistics, notes that the assembly members even gave themselves less than half marks on their electoral knowledge, when they arrived. I dare to suggest this was an over-estimate, since they gave themselves nearly full marks after they'd stayed the course.

The Citizens Assembly had the valuable task of modeling the leading systems of electoral reform. "Given that fewer discrete decisions were required to describe an STV system, the Assembly decided to begin with it." (Technical Report: Deliberation phase. Assessing electoral systems.) In short, STV was easier to model (requiring 6 decisions).

MMP required 14 of those "discrete decisions". (I would use the phrase, "arbitrary decisions," for the important ones, some being discussed here or in my previous chapter.) Only 8 decisions were actually decided. The rest were left, till after the vote, if it favored MMP. The 6 omissions included the choice of "proportional formula for allocating seats," as well as "how to address over-hang seats."

These omissions, of the proportional counting method from MMP, were serious. No model of a proportional count should be accepted, in principle, before the proportional count, in practise, has been presented for discussion and criticism.

The assembly members chose STV against MMP, despite this unfair comparison of STV count in practise with an MMP count proportional only in principle.

MMP supporters should not be allowed to dismiss their own difficulties as "details" to be dealt with, after the public has been taken in.

Yet, they dismissed STV as "too complicated," in one of their waves of submissions to the citizens assembly website.

Mixed member proportional systems represent a floundering in confusion of principle. They have no scientific credibility. Their democracy is superficial.

The alternative vote/(Instant) Run-off voting.



Run off boating.

[To top](#)

Party list systems, sometimes used for Additional Members or Mixed Member Proportional systems, are all attempts to reform the count without reforming the vote. The list system still counts X-votes or spot votes, tho for parties sharing out the seats in proportion to party votes.

Above sections have shown that both simple majority and list systems X-votes are prone to split voting, that may let in less preferred candidates.

Actually, reform of the vote came by the French Enlightenment, when preference voting for a single vacancy received distinguished treatment from the new democratic and scientific movement.

A preference vote orders the choice of candidates: 1, 2, 3, etc. If no

one candidate receives an over-all majority of first preferences, then the candidate with least votes is excluded and those votes re-distributed to their next preferences. And so on, until some candidate gets fifty or more per cent of the votes.

This is the "Alternative Vote" (AV), used for Australian general elections, and called "Instant Run-off Voting" in North America. The latter name implies that a preference vote is more convenient for the voters, who can state their alternative choices at one journey to the polls, instead of having to come back for a second ballot of X-marks-the-spot voting.

It is ironic that France still uses the second ballot, when some of its most famous sons pioneered preference voting. That is just an instance of the lack of public knowledge on the important subject of voting method to democracy.

Unfortunately, the alternative votes, promoted in the count, are those first given to the least popular candidates. This is anti-democratic. Also, the smallest difference between the two least popular candidates can decide which is excluded. But their respective vote re-distributions can elect entirely different kinds of candidate. Such results are haphazard and unstable.

AV system irrationality was shown by Enid Lakeman in "How Democracies Vote". In 1948, Alberta, the Alternative Vote gave Social Credit all the seats for 58% of the total vote. This was even more disproportionate than First Past The Post in British Columbia recently. Lakeman also speaks of "the absurdity of Victoria (Australia) in 1967 when the Liberals, with fewer first preference votes than Labour, secured nearly three times as many seats."

Marie Jean Condorcet suggested that the count of an alternative vote should be conducted by matching all the candidates, in pairs,

against each other to find if any candidate won against each of the others. But the results can be ambiguous or paradoxical.

Jean Charles, Chevalier de Borda identified the cause of this, as mistakenly treating lower preferences as of equal weight with higher preferences. Borda weighted preferences by counting the lowest as one point, the next lowest as two points, the next as three points, and so on.

(This is discussed by JFS Ross, *Elections and Electors*.)

One of history's greatest mathematicians, Pierre Simon Laplace gave a proof in favor of Borda weighted preferences over Condorcet pairing.

Nevertheless, Borda method of weighting preferences had two disadvantages. The lesser weights of lower preferences counted somewhat against higher preferences. Also, Borda weighting of the count was in "arithmetic progression" but other weightings, with a potential to change the result, were equally possible.

These objections were over-come by another weighted count of the preference vote, called the Senatorial rules or Gregory method, after its Australian inventor.

Before this could happen, proportional representation had to be invented, as a proportional count of a preference vote. Transferable voting means that when a candidate has more first preferences than he needs to win an elective proportion, or quota, of the votes in a multi-member constituency, then that winning candidate's surplus, over the quota, is transferable to his voters' next preferences.

All those winning candidate's voters' next preferences are counted in proportion to the size of the transferable surplus. In other words, the size of this surplus determines the (fractional) size of the weight given to those next preferences. The senatorial rules are a simple

arithmetic that ensure each vote counts as just one vote, while a fraction of it may help elect next preferred candidates.

STV, using the senatorial rules, means the weighting of preferences is exactly determined by the size of transferable surpluses. And these transfers cannot count against higher preferences, because they only take place when the candidate, whose surplus vote is transferred, has been elected.

Borda method only gives a majority representation. STV progresses from electing one candidate with half the votes or more, to two representatives on one-third the votes each, or more, for a proportional representation of two-thirds the voters in a two-member constituency. A three-member constituency gives a PR of three-quarters or more of the voters. And so on.

This rationalisation of representation is called the Droop quota, after its discoverer.

The limitation, of the alternative vote, is that all candidates may have less than half the first preferences. Thereby the candidate, who wins with help from later preferences, represents less than half the first preferences.

In the early 1980s, Irish constituencies (mainly three member, some four, and a few five) offered a fairly modest proportional representation. Even so, STV ensured about 70 per cent of first preferences counted towards candidates election. And around 83 to 84 per cent of voters elected someone of their choice.

Tasmania would also return about seventy per cent of representatives on first preferences. Its 7 member constituencies ensured, in all, over 90 per cent representation by first preferences "or others closely associated with them." (Jack Wright, *Representation* vol. 22. number 88.)

Reviewing these eighteenth and nineteenth century pioneers on voting method leads to this conclusion: While a preference vote is needed to order ones choice between more than two candidates, a preference vote does not work properly without a count to elect more than one representative, on proportions of the total votes, making use of transferable surpluses.

The single transferable vote.



Single transferable boat.

[To top](#)

The Droop quota gives STV a proportional count that rationalises an over-all majority to a progressively greater majority, consistent with the offer of a greater range of choice in the preference vote. Thus, STV extends and improves on the elementary election of a majority vote for one of two candidates.

This is quite different from the assumption behind MMP, as stated by the British Labour party Plant report. According to Lord Plant there was an unbridgable difference of principle between "majoritarian" representation and proportional representation.

The subsequent Jenkins report followed a similar out-look. (My sequel book has chapters critical of both reports.)

A spurious distinction, between majority counts and proportional (just explained as rationalised majority) counts, pretends to two different styles of government. The majoritarian style lionises the single largest party, usually not with an over-all majority. It is not even maiorocracy, the tyranny of the majority. It is only the tyranny of the simple majority or an "over-whelming minority."

Britains tradition of a strong executive, bequeathed to other English-speaking countries, has made politicians used to getting all their own way thru simple majority rule. The rise of a three or more party system has not made political incumbents give up their old ways, so much as oblige them to concede more proportion in representation.

The mixed member proportional system embodies this split mentality or ambivalence. But there is no point in making an MMP hybrid of two "unbridgable" principles, because, as such, they couldnt possibly work together. And, as shown in above sections, they dont.

The MMP dilemma comes from failing to appreciate how it takes STV for a proportional count to produce a genuine majority, by cross-party preference voting.

Partisan disregard for the voters wishes is shown in the attitude that when voters prefer candidates, across party lines from their own party, this is a "leaking" of votes, as if they were to be captured from the voters.

In Malta, the two parties told their supporters to number all their partys candidates "and then stop."

Australian parties told people how to vote, with "How to vote" cards, tho they were banned in Tasmania.

These encroachments on the voters rights exemplify parties putting themselves before their countries.

According to Enid Lakeman (in *Representation*, vol. 22, number 87) transferring votes between candidates of different parties did not explain why, in Malta, 1981, the party with slightly more total first preferences had slightly less seats. In sixty years, this was the first such modest anomaly, if it was an anomaly at all. "Incongruence" might be a better term, as the total votes, after the last stage has been counted, is the truer basis of comparison.

As Malta's two parties had the voters very much under partisan control, any anomaly appears to have come from the continuous and contentious re-drawing of boundaries to maintain equal constituencies. These are not needed in a multi-member system, where natural boundaries can be respected by varying the number of seats per constituency.

The Citizens Assembly recognised such variation was essential for such a disparate territory as British Columbia.

If the Maltese have been somewhat imposed upon by the parties, they remain exemplary voters.

Over a series of four Maltese elections, for instance, less than 1 per cent of their votes were invalid.

Their 90-plus per cent turn-outs have been the best in Europe. In 1999, Ireland, also with STV, had twenty per cent higher Euro-elections turn-out than Britain. Northern Ireland/Ulster had twenty to thirty per cent higher.

The most serious deprivation, of freedom to transfer votes, in a supposedly STV system, is in Australian federal senate elections, compelling preferences for all candidates, scores of them. An eighth of the votes would be invalid. This forced feeding of the peoples

preference served the party bosses preference, when later legislation let the voters off with an x-vote for a party list.

Freely transferable voting can decide democratically the preferred majority coalition to form a government.

In 1973, Fine Gael and Labour agreed to fight on a "common programme" to form a "National Coalition." They narrowly won the election and it is estimated that the two parties gained six seats from lower preferences being transferred between candidates of the two parties.

In the nineteen forties, Irish Labour lost a splinter group, National Labour. But voters still transferred their vote, so that Labour did not lose much representation, and by 1950, National Labour rejoined the main group.

If desired, transferable votes can both bridge different parties and help keep the same party together. That is cross-party and within-party preference voting, respectively.

If the people wanted to, they could prefer candidates across several parties amounting to something like a preference for a national government -- perhaps desirable in a national emergency.

STV is proportional representation, proper, with or without parties. It could produce a post-modernist parliament made up largely of Independents, if that is what the people preferred. Ireland has a significant number of Independents. And Britain's STV university constituencies, returned several distinguished Independents to the House of Commons.

STV can *freely* express unity as well as division. And that is why it confounds critics, who wrongly assume it must lead to a proliferation of parties, like list systems. Sometimes it does. At other times, a country with STV prefers just two parties, as in Tasmania and Malta,

or "a two and a half party system" that Ireland settled down to, for a considerable period.

The joke on its critics is that STV does not have the serious bias built in other systems. Its changableness is more attributable to the occasional human desire for a change. In sum, STV, in large enough constituencies, and generally without partisan corruption of the system, uniquely gives the kind of parliament the public wants.

STV is the original and genuine "proportional representation" that gives no privileged or oligarchic position in the count to parties or any other group. This means that STV is used for all kinds of social and professional elections that require proportional representation to all groups (and not just one) regarded as significant by the voters. Previously, in the British National Health Service, first past the post ensured that white male General Practitioners swept the board. STV gave PR to women, ethnic minorities and specialists. Now the New Zealand NHS also uses STV.

This system of proportional preference applies just as much to the composition of a political parliament. Moreover, politics itself can change with the times much better with STV than with party lists. If an issue becomes important enough, the list system can count it as the policy of a new party. But that puts the policy, like conservation, say, in competition with a lot of other issue parties, fragmenting support for all of them and promoting deadlock. List systems establish a party like the Greens but as something like a political ghetto for the environment.

STV gives the freedom to prefer individual candidates, of any party or none, according to one or more policy issues. If the environment is important to most voters, that will show in their environment-saving

choices of candidates from all parties. With STV, one doesn't have to wait for the Green party to win an election for an environmental majority to be returned to parliament.

The same applies to any other issue or combination of issues that candidates may represent. STV elects individual candidates for their priorities, as distinct from the dilemmas posed by manifestos that voters may only agree with in part. Transferable voting offers a much more discerning combination of choices to a country.

STV has nothing to do with whether some organisation, like the Papacy, urges a passive role upon women, as it did again recently, for Catholic countries like Ireland and Malta. Only if they want it, does STV allow the voters to give equal representation to women. By ignoring this crucial qualification, STV was misrepresented as not being equally representative of women.

As one of the nine presenters, selected by the BC Citizens Assembly, Dr Julian West felt obliged to briefly mention the misrepresentations of STV.

Another obvious and ludicrous misrepresentation from partisan man was that voters didn't want all the choice STV gave.

As reformers are no doubt tired of replying, STV permits great choice (obviously used in the NHS example) but does not prevent voters making as minimal and miserable a choice as offered by other systems.

In the 2002 Irish election, 6% cast just one preference; 81% voted for candidates of at least two parties and 49% for candidates of at least three parties. Nearly 8% preferred all the candidates.

People would rather be asked than told. Transferable voting allows the searching questions to be asked. An STV election becomes a research into the composition of the voters support. Its electoral freedom of information is based on an individual freedom of choice

that may transcend party divisions even to indications of national unity. Knowledge and freedom depend on each other and this partnership in progress is made possible in elections thru the freely scientific method of STV.

Technical appendix: STV evolves.



[To top](#)

As the BC Citizens Assembly recommendation says, STV is as easy as 1, 2, 3,... for voters to use. You just order your first, second, third, etc choice of candidates.

It is just counting all the voters permutations of preferences that is complicated, requiring trained returning officers. This is a long established procedure.

In the above section on the Alternative Vote, I sketched how STV evolved mainly in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, Brian Meek method computerised the STV count, allowing the transfer of every surplus to be followed-thru without ambiguity and to unprecedented degrees of accuracy.

A remaining weakness in STV is what happens when the count runs out of surpluses. The procedure is to exclude the candidate who is "last past the post," that is, who is unlucky enough to have least

votes at that stage.

This is the problem of "premature exclusion."

Some opponents have used, for instance, a contrived example of an STV election, with just a few voters, and where no candidate has a transferable surplus. It was shown that some candidate gaining marginally more votes possibly could lose him a seat, he would otherwise have won.

STV opponents were not concerned that it is a common-place of actual elections -- not their hypothetical cases -- that First Past The Post can give parties less seats for more votes. And that simple majority system fault needs putting in context with its much bigger faults. I do this by a last brief quote from Enid Lakeman, *Representation*, already cited in the introduction, on the Canadian general election of 1980:

"...The New Democratic Party gained votes nearly everywhere but with very inconsistent effects on its seats: in Nova Scotia a *gain* of 2% meant a *loss* of the only NDP seat and identical gains of 0.4% meant in Saskatchewan a rise from 4 to 7 seats but in Ontario a fall from 6 to 5 seats. Ontario is the marginal province on which the whole result hinges, and there a small swing almost exactly reversed the representation of the two largest parties -- 38:57 to 52:32. The exaggeration of the difference between Quebec and the rest has been further increased, the Liberals now holding all but one of its 75 seats for two thirds of the votes."

Those and other results, Enid Lakeman called "Canada's erratic pendulum." Yet, British Labours Plant (interim) report faulted STV as an option against the single member system, like the proverbial hypocrite that would remove the mote from anothers eye while leaving the beam in their own.

When the Labour party came to power, in 1997, they accordingly introduced any other system but STV. (This is the subject of my chapter, "The Two Cultures. Electoral Lawlessness in Britain by the turn of the twenty-first century.") Half a dozen undemocratic voting methods are used in Britain, where one democratic method would do.

Of course, there was no justice in out-lawing STV because of its last past the post exclusion, when it would be much more to the point to replace first past the post elections, which more directly produce anomalies on a much bigger scale. But this unfairness did high-light the fact that STV still possessed a relic of plurality counting in its exclusion count.

Early in 2004, I suggested that the exclusion count of STV be a proportional count, just like its election count. That is, no candidate could be excluded until they reached a quota of least preference (by counting voters preferences in reverse order). This system would give voters power of exclusion, as well as election.

Both a proportional election count and a proportional exclusion count may run out of transferable surpluses before candidates have won all the seats. Once this rational count of election or exclusion is exhausted, then one is back again to plurality counting and a suspicion of criticism.

Later in 2004, I realised this proportional preference and proportional unpreference counting could be considered as but the first approximation to a series of higher order approximations. The results of the election count and the exclusion count can be used to qualify each other, by conducting further counts to see what happens when an elected or excluded candidate is taken out of consideration. This akin to a controled experiment.

A late chapter on this "Binomial STV" is in my sequel book, Scientific Method of Elections. I imagine my innovation will remain in the realm of theory, rather than (computer-counted) practise, for quite some time.

STV has evolved over nearly two centuries and is capable of further improvement. This is a unique distinction of STV, to evolve into a specialist science of electoral method.

The alternative, to the scientific or knowledgable improvement of democracy, is the party dictatorship or oligarchy that denies a preference vote to all but party bosses or activists making out their party lists.

The irony is that list system counts of proportional partisanship are nothing like so intuitive as STV standard use of the Droop quota for proportional representation, proper. List or additional list advocates dont mention and cannot solve the anarchy of proportional counts for their systems.

The illustrations come from R M Ballantyne: "Hudson Bay." They are by E Bayard and other artists, based on sketches by the author.

*13; 18 january 2005;
modified april 2015.*

Further references:

Proportional Representation Society of Australia: Quota Notes.

Changed Voting Changed Politics. Independent Commission on PR:
The Constitution Unit, 2003. School of Public Policy, UCL

[To top](#)

STV elections, not single member exclusions nor list appointments.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Links to sections:

Summary.

[The mandate:](#)

[Order and proportion](#) are essential to electoral system.

Principled [recommendation](#): STV.

The official brief is a paradox that no one right method is the one [right method](#).

The fallacy of [pre-emptive voting](#) methods.

[Farewell.](#)

Appendix 1: on some [mistakes](#) in the brief.

Appendix 2: on a further [unconstitutional veto](#) effected by the double-60 referendum threshold.

[References.](#)

Summary.

The consensus of the Ontario Citizens Assembly was for a proportional count, as seems to be the case among submissions so far. Then, the key question is: do all the voters get a preference vote (as with Single Transferable Vote, STV) or is a preference vote granted only to the privileged, who rank candidates on Party Lists, including in the Mixed Member Proportional system, MMP? (In Britain, MMP means AMS, Additional Member System.)

I agree with the British Columbia Citizens Assembly recommendation of the Single Transferable Vote for proportional representation with its democratic preference voting, that can rank choice of candidates from the same and different parties, to transcend divisions for a desired degree and kind of national unity. If the Citizens Assembly decides STV is the best system for Ontario, its less sparse population, than in BC, might justify a marginly more proportional representation.

This Guidelined Submission follows my original submission, Citizens Assemblies of Canada choose a voting system.

To sugar the pill, that review has appropriate color paintings and monochrome engravings of pioneer Canada!

Questions from Assembly members are welcome. (E-mail: voting@ukscientists.com)

The mandate.

[To top.](#)

The Ontario Citizens Assembly mandate regards the electoral system, in particular these questions:

1. The type of ballot (for example do voters mark one X or rank candidates according to preferences).
2. How our votes are counted at election time.
3. The number of representatives per electoral district (riding).
4. The geographical size of electoral districts.
5. The size of the legislature.

The first two questions concern the general nature of electoral systems. All elections consist of a vote and a count. The kind of vote and the kind of count is the main Assembly decision of principle: voter choice. Indeed, to elect means to choose out. That decision will condition the three remaining questions, which relate mainly to how local is the representation to be.

1: The choices of vote.

In principle, electing or choosing is very simple to understand.

Firstly, the type of ballot. The Assembly mandate says: for example X-voting or ranked choice. But one or the other is all the choice there is to make. It is one or the other. That is essentially all there is.

The different ways of counting X-votes or ordinal votes comes after the two choices of vote.

It gets better. The X-vote and the ranked vote are not really different kinds of vote. They only differ in the amount of choice they offer. The X-vote gives a single order of choice: one candidate before another or others. The X-vote, for single order of choice, is the least elective of votes, sometimes a tactical (strategic) vote for a lower preference to keep out a least preferred candidate.

Giving each voter more than one X-vote says nothing about the order of choice between each of the X-voted candidates. Several X-votes per voter, for several candidates, count against each other.

Cumulative Voting allows some candidates to have more X-votes than others. But one X-vote for a candidate still counts against one of, say, two X-votes for a more preferred candidate. Also, cumulating more than one X-vote, on one candidate, denies those cumulated votes to other candidates who might be worth preferring compared to the rest. Cumulative voting was a failed experiment in ranked choice. (This is also the defect of points systems, like the method of Borda, that gives more points to higher ranked choices.)

Lower preferences do not count against higher preferences, with a proportional count of a preference vote, in a multi-member constituency: If the most preferred candidate gets more votes than a winning proportion of the votes, that candidate is elected, and the surplus vote cannot count against the win, when it is transferred to help elect next preferred candidates.

This method is called the Single Transferable Vote, STV.

The arithmetic, of counting surplus votes to transfer, is the Gregory method, also called the Senatorial Rules, as used for Commonwealth senates. (Currently, Canadian Prime Minister

Stephen Harper has proposed that citizens vote on potential senators during federal elections, using STV.)

When there are no surplus votes to transfer, then STV falls back on an exclusion count: the candidate, with the least first preferences, is excluded and his votes re-distributed to next preferences.

The exclusion count is not as logically water-tight, as the Senatorial Rules, because some candidate gets excluded, at a stage in the count, when they just happen to be trailing the other candidates. This summary justice has been criticised out of proportion to its effect, which it is not practical to exploit, anyway.

Premature exclusion of a trailing candidate may be more simple than strictly just, but STV has already taken more trouble than any other system to respect voter preferences, making it the least exclusive voting system.

For instance, Single Member Plurality (First Past The Post) is more exclusion count than election count, whenever there are more than two candidates. (Even for just two candidates, SMP is as much an exclusion as an election.) Party Lists are the preference votes of party bosses, and you cannot get much more exclusive than that!

2: The choices of count.

When we ask how to count who are the most representative candidates, again there is a pleasant surprise. Just as there are only two choices of vote, so there are only two choices of count, majority counting and proportional counting. And it gets better still.

Remember, X-voting, giving one choice to order, is only the most limited kind of vote compared to preference voting, giving many choices to order: 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc choice.

Likewise, a majority count is only the most limited kind of majority count, offering one majority of over half the votes in a single member constituency. There is a certain proportional count (called the Droop quota) which offers many majorities in a multi-member constituency.

With a two member constituency, two candidates are elected on a quota of one third the votes each, thus proportionally representing two-thirds of the constituents. With STV, a two member constituency is of two majorities over a remainder of up to a third the votes going unrepresented. Three members represent three-quarters the constituents: three majorities over the remaining constituents of up to a quarter, who still go unrepresented.

This is an essential but over-looked fact about electoral counting: With STV, a proportional count is a many-majorities count over a residual minority. Majority counting, so-called, is just one-majority counting in a single member constituency. STV is a rationalisation of the (over-all) majority system, making for fairer or more equal representation.

With STV, a proportional count is a multi-majority count. There is no reasonable basis for treating majority and proportion in terms of two kinds of system, the Single-member and List systems, or as combinations of system, like the Mixed and Parallel systems.

Supporters of the Mixed Member Proportional system assure you it is easy to understand. Evidence, from all the countries where MMP is used, that many people do not understand the Mixed system, owes to the unreasonableness of a mixed-up system, not of mixed-up people.

3 & 4: Representatives per electoral district & their geographical size.

As constituencies get proportionately bigger, they represent more majorities relative to the residual wasted votes of less than the quota. Diminishing returns do set in, so a five-member constituency, giving a proportional representation of at least five-sixths of the voters, or some eighty-three per cent, is often considered by reformers as fair enough, without becoming too remote from local boundaries.

Even the odd nine-member constituency, given that voters rank at least their nine most preferred candidates, is only going to improve the representation to at least ninety per cent of voters.

The British Columbia Citizens Assembly report retained a minimum of proportionality in a few two member constituencies for its most vast wildernesses. Also recommended was a two member constituency for its nomadic original inhabitants. Whereas, the densest electorates might have unitary urban constituencies of more than five members, with perhaps as many as seven or eight members. Four to six seats would make up the bulk of the constituencies.

Being more densely populated than BC, Ontario might want a higher average PR than recommended for BC by their Citizens Assembly. Michael Bednarski (1068) submitted a sample map of STV constituencies for Ontario, averaging about seven members. (I support his arguments in his separate submission 1179.) Quite rightly, his draft had caveats, but it was interesting that the smallest constituency was of three members and there were not many of those.

That degree of proportional representation would not just be of the mainstream cultures and opinions but would also be capable of collecting all the main social tributaries of a province, diverse in character and outlook. This promotes a popular participation that does not just affirm conventional wisdom but allows new views a voice in a changing world and makes politics relevant again.

Just as the railways made possible Canada and the USA, as great federations, so there are tele-conferences and other convenient communications to reach out to remote communities for their political, as well as business, educational, social and recreational needs. Some constituents business or official problems shouldnt need a trek to a single members base or a choice of members bases. The multi-member choice of trek would offer more options, anyway.

Local representation is served by STV multi-member constituencies being varied in proportion to the sizes of local communities. But local representation is primarily served by more or less local levels of government, at district, provincial, or federal levels. No level needs to be put in the election straight-jacket of a single-member system. That turns Elections for voters primarily into Locations for place-holders.

In a democracy, the representatives are supposed to serve the represented, and not the other way round, as has made a world sickness of politics.

Single seat constituencies are too non-descript, laborious and expensive to bound and revise bounds. This is implicitly recognised in local elections, often left somewhat multi-member, despite the politicians favoring monopolies, which they call links, because it sounds better.

STV boundaries are much simpler and cheaper to change. They offer stability to real local communities. If they undergo a rise or fall in electorates, this change can be equitably met by an increase or decrease of a seat in the multi-member constituency. The natural and communal bound can be an identified source of civic pride, unlike the ever shifting single member bounds.

Critics of STV sometimes make themselves look foolish by complaining STV is not accountable enough and then complaining that it is too accountable (as in Britain with the Plant report and the Jenkins report). This comes from failing to distinguish two different kinds of accountability: top down and bottom up.

The single member system resembles the territorial accountability of the feudal system. The local lord or squire was accountable to his king, who gave him his territory in return for allegiance in the supplying of serfs for his wars. So, the lord had to keep his serfs in good enough condition to be destroyed by fighting. This was top down accountability.

The single member system is a decayed form of top down accountability. The king no longer has executive power. Now the MPs as local lords or squires are accountable chiefly to themselves, having taken control of the government thru their party organisations.

This is the kind of accountability meant by the assembly brief, Electoral Systems Simulations, Part 1, on pages 17 and 24, with regard to local representation and mixed member systems:

"Every citizen has one MPP from his or her SMP district, which promotes accountability."

The leading single members, the party leaders are themselves the top. And all single members exclusive territories resist accountability

from the bottom up direction.

Some politicians express this resistance, in the contrary complaint against STV that it is too accountable. That is because constituents can choose among several representatives in a multi-member constituency. Every member has to work well to ensure the voters give them high enough preferences to achieve their quota of votes for election. In other words, this objection to STV is against its democratic accountability.

Place-holders hanker for unaccountable safe seats that can discount those with the common complaint, noticed in submissions, that they have never been able to elect anyone they wanted to. I've found that to be the case in Britain, as well.

5: the size of the legislature.

Eileen Wennekers (1124) noted that Ontario has a below-average number of seats for a provincial parliament. So, she alternatively researched possible STV boundaries for a more typical size provincial parliament, with a spread from three-members up to one nine-member.

Otherwise, STV could simply be a judicious combining of existing single member constituencies, with proper consultation of constituents.

The size of the legislature would be increased by the introduction of additional members proportionally elected from party lists. Some contributors have suggested new members elected separately without affecting the existing plurality system. Whether MMP or Parallel system, this arrangement sets up two kingdoms: a divided authority of the manufactured majority party versus proportional partisanship. The unresolved conflict, in these self-contradictory

claims to legitimacy for larger versus smaller parties, institutionalises mutual rancor.

Order and proportion are essential to electoral system.

[To top.](#)

The section above, on the Ontario government mandate to the Citizens Assembly, shows that electoral system, or the logic of choice, depends on order and proportion. This is not surprising as order and proportion rule many branches of knowledge, technique and the arts.

Here, I just want to show how order and proportion are the essence of electoral method, however scant the political regard for them. Thus, simple plurality systems rely on the order of candidates first past the post, to decide the winner. Open list systems also rely on simple plurality order to elect candidates on their list, according to the number of seats they win on a proportional count of party votes.

Thus, simple plurality and open lists depend on order of election. But they do not depend on the order of election, from a preference vote, instead of the X-vote splitting support for more popular candidates to let in the less popular. Nevertheless, we know that voter order of choice is an essential attribute of electoral system, because parties themselves generally ensure their leadership contests are with an exhaustive ballot. And presidential contests usually use a second ballot, so that if your first choice doesn't come thru, you can vote for a second choice.

Tho, the American presidential election still counts on squeezing out a third candidate by polling day. The USA reminds me of Britain during the eighteen years constitutional ice-age of Conservative

government. Then the Labour government thawed elections into a chaos of systems, like constitutional global warming.

Electoral change is coming to the individualist USA rather differently than it came to Europe and those influenced by European methods. Americans have many leadership contests, such as for President, the state governors, city mayors, as well as other leading civic posts. So, split voting appears to have impressed itself on Americans perhaps more than disproportion.

For instance, in Minnesota, across Lake Ontario, they have had a two-times elected governor on a minority vote, as for the presidencies of Clinton. This was thought to have encouraged the assailing of his authority. While the Ontario Citizens Assembly have been in session, the Better Ballots campaign won a referendum on Instant Run-off Voting (Alternative Vote) in Minneapolis, for Mayor, City Council, and Park and Recreation District Commissioner. Proportional voting (by the single transferable vote) is introduced into Minneapolis for multi-seat elections to Park Board, Library Board and Board of Estimate and Taxation.

That may not seem very grand. However, Tony Solgard, the president of Fair Vote Minnesota said he is well aware of the proportional advantages of STV over single seat IRV. The Fair Vote Minnesota website has the pdf, What it takes: The Minneapolis Better Ballot Campaign for Instant Run-off Voting (december 2006).

I was agog at the efficiency of their organisation.

[P.S. april 2015: Another US state, Maine is likewise introducing Ranked Choice Voting in single and multi-member constituencies (respectively Alternative Vote and Single Transferable Vote). That is quite significant.]

Moreover, it is often over-looked how widespread STV is becoming in all manner of elections. This is particularly true of educational bodies in Britain, Australia, the United States and even in Europe. (Tho incomplete, see Wikipedia, History and use of the Single Transferable Vote.

The awful truth is that STV has gone beyond a political cause. The number of British citizens using STV compares, in size, to the Irish electorate. The other day, I came across a web page on football governance, commenting that their club supporters use a good system, the single transferable vote.)

To emphasise, preference voting, is a necessary condition of proportional counting, in electoral system. Closed lists, also used in Mixed Member Proportional systems, do need a preference vote. It is just that the party boss who ranks his partys candidates on the list is the only voter preferentially enfranchised.

Democracy requires preferential enfranchisement of all voters, not just party managers or activists. And party list systems are not just at fault here for their double standards. In the simple plurality system, in Britain, there has been a trend for the two main parties to impose national lists of candidates on local constituency associations and their dominance by white male professional candidates. Party HQ is doing the ordering of candidates from different social groups, in proportion to their numbers in the nation.

In Britain, a new Tory leadership A-list is an attempt to impose proportional representation on a simple plurality system, without giving the voters the benefit of the real thing. That is no better than a party list system that gives a suffrage only of one preference vote per party boss or caucus.

Historicly, the voters were only enfranchised with the one-preference

X-vote. It is long over-due for them to be preferentially enfranchised with ranked choice of candidates on the ballot.

Even Britains Tories have tacitly accepted that proportional representation is an essential ingredient of their image if they are to be re-elected. They have not accepted that PR must be more than about image. Not for them, the principle effectively applied in genuinely democratic method. The Tories remain zealots for equal constituencies, which is, actually, proportional representation *between* constituencies, the sort of PR that has historicly given them disproportionate representation, owing to their - and Labour - obstruction of proportional representation (in the usual sense of) *within* constituencies.

This evidence shows that the most die-hard opponents to proportional representation implicitly rely one-sidedly and self-servingly on the PR principle in their own basic claims to electoral legitimacy. Proportion, like preference, is an indispensable property of electoral system.

And there is a well-tried electoral system that effectively combines these two essentials, in a proportional count of a preference vote. That is the single transferable vote, STV.

Principled recommendation: STV.

[To top.](#)

As explained, above, in the mandate section, STV is the generalised electoral system, from one preference for one majority (as in a two-party system), to many preferences for many majorities: ranked choices transferable over the proportional count, in many-member constituencies.

STV, as a consistent generalisation of the vote with the count, is the true or scientific explanation of choice. This generality defines transferable voting. Its lack, in other systems, explains why they are defective.

STV proportional representation of all society not just parties.

STV proportionally elects individual candidates, so that all human attributes or groups, including parties, are *fairly represented*, according to the characteristics of the candidates that voters think important.

In the 1920s, the Scottish education authorities use of STV allowed the proportional representation of different faiths, religion being a more important issue than party, in the running of schools. Enid Lakeman says that a majority system would have given no representation to Roman Catholics in Edinburgh and little if any in Glasgow.

Other proportional counts oblige you to vote for oligarchic lists, leaving social representation to party patronage. The lists deficiency may be glossed over by a few extra-electoral sops, which are really props to a bad system. Women may be bought off by a statutory requirement of equal numbers of candidates by gender. And some or other ethnic minority might be guaranteed seats, setting them apart from ordinary constituents, and indeed the needs of ethnic constituents apart from their ethnicity.

The Mixed Member Proportional system generally has dual candidacy: two safety nets for preventing candidates being rejected by voters. If their safe seat in the single member system lets them down, they can still be elected from safely high on their party list.

Only STV elects the most preferred individual representatives to parliament (which makes STV uniquely *accountable*, not having the safe seats in monopolistic single member systems or high on party lists). And, thereby, by preferring certain candidates of more than one party, STV popularly prefers a power-sharing government, supposing no one party of candidates wins a majority of seats.

STV has unique power of preferring a government, in the cross-party PR of government to opposition support.

STV gives democratic authority to a preferred coalition, if necessary, making for *effective parties*, that are known to have the support of the country as their chosen partners for government.

Lists or Mixed systems do not allow voters to choose a government, which can wait months on caucus wheeling and dealing. Some party-minded electoral reformers simply took offense against the forbidden topic, for them, of ineffective parties using List systems, on Continental Europe before the second world war, and their being thrown impatiently aside for dictatorships.

Airey Neave MP recalled the Weimar system of closed lists that made the Nazis the single largest party. And pointed out that it was the Liberals led by von Papen, who formed a coalition with them to put Hitler into power.

The British Liberals, seeking "some form of proportional representation" (never mind democratic form) merely took affront, instead of engaging like adults with a perfectly true and fair criticism.

STV allows voters to prefer individual candidates across party lines, so effecting coalitions. A nasty party might be first past the post, among party votes, but have little sympathy from other parties

supporters, who would transfer their votes elsewhere, denying an isolated nasty party a majority of seats in parliament.

While this is true, it must be admitted that democracy is about fully letting the people decide and be responsible, sometimes making mistakes to learn from, instead of having mistakes made for them.

The Liberals could have replied to Neave, that they didnt support PR without personal representation, as many disinterested reformers made clear.

But no, the Liberals defenestrated liberalism. Voters individual freedom of choice was sacrificed for impersonal votes for party lists, eventually used in Euro-elections and for Additional Members, in various other British elections.

The Israeli election system supports William James observing a certain blindness in human nature. For, German Jews evidently took the Weimar election system of closed party lists with them to Israel.

I have often admitted, in my writings, to my own inability to see anything wrong with the familiar FPTP election system, til I was obliged to study the options.

The general public are not aware of election deficiencies (until they are pointed out) much less their remedy.

This innocent ignorance is confirmed by research (gathered in: Changed Voting Changed Politics).

The party vote puts party before country and individual rights. Ignorant or unscrupulous critics usually pretended proportional representation always meant ineffective party list systems.

Dictatorship and its mentality in nominally democratic countries is still with us. The modern world may be remembered for devastating greed, if it survives it. The other week, the traditionly conservative

Economist magazine published a letter from an American political scientist, stating that the remarkable thing about corruption in the East is how like it Western corruption is. Its unflattering tone towards a sample of top people in Western governments was most unacademic. It is perhaps a symptom of political and economic affairs having gone beyond the acceptable, even among the still comfortable classes.

In Britain, the Power Inquiry, for instance, noted a world-wide disillusion with politics. But what do we hear from the party-minded electoral reformers? I've heard it for thirty years, as well as in Ontario CA submissions: Something to the effect that most modern democracies use proportional representation. And most of those use party lists, at least for additional members to the single member system.

(That is the herd instinct masquerading as reason.)

"PR" opponents long said that Italy and Israel had off-putting stability problems from a proliferation of parties with list systems. Against this, Michael Meadowcroft reckoned Italian formal ministry changes were superficial compared to the continual government reshuffles of ministers in Britain, rarely settling down to their jobs.

Some pointed to the German MMP system, as particularly free from unstable government. Yet the German Christian Democrats became just as embroiled in financial scandal as the Italian Christian Democrats before them.

The most recent German election was a classic in prolonged public helplessness to determine their own preferred coalition majority, under a party-proportional system.

Maybe the most serious charge against all party vote systems is their corporatism. The business corporation, lacking personal accountability, is the disease of our time, that has allowed a rape of

world resources and habitat destruction that is ultimately in the interest of none.

Now these party list proportionalists blithely pronounce, as a remedy, the very disease for elections that ruins the environment and public welfare: namely, corporatism. The group as a legal individual breaks equality before the law. It is the anarchy of one law for big business - or the party list - and another law for the rest of us.

Simple plurality systems extort tactical voting for one of two main party rivals to form a government. Whereas Party lists allow smaller parties to extort concessions from the larger parties to form a government.

Mixed or Parallel systems more or less combine both extortion rackets: two main parties are kept established by simple plurality thru the blackmail of a wasted vote. And government formation is blackmailed (as Israeli premier Sharon said) by small list parties particular demands.

In Germany, the Free Democrats, with their list seats, long got a free ride in government thru holding the balance of power. But their being squeezed out of the single member contests, kept them a stooge party, if a stooge that could hold to ransom which of the other two formed a government with them. MMP is a tail wagging the dog system.

Fanatical small parties have been slow to realise that MMP has kept small parties at the tail end of the system, even if the voters would really like a change.

Thus, in the MMP system, large parties and small parties cheat each other. Most of all, partisan systems cheat the public of deciding their preferred partnership in government.

STV allows the voters to express a degree and kind of national unity, unmatched by any other system, for promoting popular unity of

purpose and *stable and effective government*. This amounts to proportional representation *across* parties, as well as *between* parties. This PR across parties can be the proportional representation of government to opposition support.

The Northern Ireland Euro-elections is a classic case of STV giving PR across parties, so saving a seat for one of the two nationalist parties, by allowing the nationalists of both parties to transfer their votes. Whereas List PR would have split the nationalist vote between two nationalist party lists, and lost their entitlement to one of three Euro-seats, as one third of the Ulster electorate.

STV as unique solution to the primaries problem.

STV also gives PR *within* parties, as voters can prefer candidates of the same party, thus improving the quality of representatives and making for an *effective parliament*. Moreover, STV is unique in solving the primaries problem of how to allow all the voters to choose between more than one candidate from each party.

The United States failed to solve this primaries problem. When well-meaning party organisations allowed everyone to vote in their primaries, rival partisans voted for the worst candidates of the other party. American election lawyers argue futilely over closed versus open primaries, just as party-proportional reformers argue futilely over closed versus open lists.

The Mixed Member Proportional system, given open lists, is posed with a primaries problem. Usually, two main parties each need a small party partner, or more, to hope to form a coalition government. Larger party supporters vote for their nominated single members, with their first X-vote. Their second X-vote, for a party list, might go

to their supporting party. Were the lists open, then they could vote for the worst candidate of their supporting party to keep the stooge parties ineffective and subservient to the main parties.

Politicians have led the criticism against STV precisely because it does effect a choice that is like holding primaries within the context of the general election.

Some politicians don't like the idea that voters can prefer between candidates of the same party. They prefer to hide their personal unpopularity, behind partisan support for their monopolistic nominations to single (party) member constituencies, or, behind high position on a party list.

It is a safe-seat excuse that STV, effecting primaries, is divisive of parties. There is evidence that this STV effect is unitive of parties. When the Irish Labour party split into two parties, Irish voters kept transferring their votes between the candidates of both splinter parties. This minimised seat losses, and eventually they accepted the reality, of the voters perception of them, and rejoined.

The transferable vote has this unique power of unifying a people within parties, as well as across parties. Whereas party list systems increase the number of parties, because every time there is a serious division of opinion, the only solution is to form a new party, for the voters to offer it support. Party list divisions encourage, and are a consequence of, pushing party dogmas thru parliament without adequate debate.

Party lists are for MPs as delegates, or opinion clones, not individuals with any integrity and power of independent thought. STV gives the voters the power precisely to prefer such people with initiative. Even the minimally proportional STV university constituencies, in the British House of Commons till 1950, produced distinguished Independents.

The transferable vote transcends brittle opinion blocs, by recognising gradations of opinion, thru preferred individual candidates within groups, or across sub-groups, and across group divisions. STV may unite a nation democratically, instead of allowing party oligarchies to divide and rule, with their monopolistic constituencies and partisan lists.

STV is the only generally suitable voting system.

Following Germany, New Zealand and Britain took good care to keep their MMP system lists closed. In Scotland, the Arbuthnott report vaguely held out the false pretense that open lists would allow workable individual freedom of representation. The report left the open list to officials to design, an abdication of their responsibility, to avoid making a proposal they knew would be criticised out of respectable existence.

Yet their somewhat misinformed report admitted that STV might have to be introduced eventually to the Scottish parliament, as is happening for their local elections, and recommended by them for their European elections.

Despite themselves, the Arbuthnott commission tacitly admitted that STV is suitable for all levels of government. I guess if the British government and a new one-party executive in the Welsh Assembly hadn't blocked, without reason, the Richard Report and the Sunderland Report recommendations of STV for the Assembly and local elections in Wales, the Arbuthnott report might not have pussy-footed on the issue in Scotland.

STV is used at all government levels in the Republic of Ireland. STV is not used in Northern Ireland for general elections, which are part of UK first past the post general elections. The two main British

parties have urged power-sharing on Ulster, but, to this day, wont lead by example.

Contrary to what some Ontario submissions assume, the public does not find MMP easy to understand. This is vividly documented in both the Richard and the Arbuthnott Reports.

The latter made the common assumption that voters would find STV hard to understand. They didnt take any notice of the Richard Report. One of the Richard commission visited an Ulster STV election and found that the people readily understood it and all the parties agreed it was fair. That is an incredible admission in a province, long divided by sectarian violence, where agreement remains a scarce commodity.

STV for democratic progress vs oligarchic dogmas.

A submission for the Netherlands party list system raises the question: Want to be an Independent? And answers: Start your own party.

I know that the Netherlands have exceptionally low thresholds for this. All the same, if I want to take a distinctive view on any issue, I dont want to have to found a new political party over it.

Yet the expectation is that candidates on the list toe their party lines. Otherwise, what point in the voters choosing them, if they arent going to do what they say?

This is the politics of manifesto promises, in which Parliament is reduced to a check-out point for pre-packaged policies. Parliament should not be the parties rubber stamp.

The purpose of the nations debating chamber should be for people representing different views, to come together and learn from each

other, just as, say, scientists or engineers get together at conferences, to find out and co-ordinate progress in a research. Introducing party lists of opinion clones would only confirm the parties preventing of free thought and informed decisions, on which progress depends.

Doctrinal parties subjugate Parliament to an office of legislation for their particular interests. STV transcends party divisions. That is only part of the answer, but it is an essential condition of the individual freedom of thought that recognises truths beyond party dogmas and may seek common ground in the national or provincial parliament.

Parties are abused, to promote particular interests over the common good, thru dogmatically partisan electoral systems. The vested interests problem goes deeper. A second chamber is needed to promote Equality Of Lobbying, with vocational or occupational constituencies, also elected with STV. Transferable voting on a first chamber political franchise and a second chamber economic franchise would make for a doubly effective parliament of genuine debate, respectively, by the gathered local community interests and gathered special interests.

I believe Assembly Citizens do have the power to put forward constitutional suggestions, so I recommend an STV-elected economic second chamber for Ontario. (This relates to my subject of Constitutional Economics.)

Recommendation conclusion.

Simple plurality systems give too much power to established parties. Party List systems give too much power to small parties. Parallel or Mixed systems, more or less, give too much entrenchment power to established parties and too much ransom power to small parties.

In general, non-transferable voting systems give too much power to parties and too little to the people. They are oligarchic rather than democratic voting methods, promoting political place-holding to keep it in the family.

The democratic power of STV, thru national unity in individual liberty, is its *legitimacy* and encouragement to *stronger voter participation*. STV expresses proportional partisanship, in so far as it is there. Unlike other proportional systems, STV does not impose partisanship on a nation, as if nothing else but divisions and doctrinaires matter. STV is a progressive electoral system of policy adaptation, in a changing world, which most involves the energy and genius of the whole community.

The official brief is a paradox that no one right method is the one right method.

[To top.](#)

The British Columbia Citizens Assembly identified basic values for themselves. The main parties did not set up a Select Committee to direct the citizens assembly. Indeed, the Wikipedia entry on Citizens Assemblies (Ontario) censured the three main Ontario parties Select Committee report. Also, the Ontario CA has been lectured by representatives of the three main parties.

In BC, the politicians kept away. Tho, some, connected to the then Green leader in BC, incited lobbying the assembly.

In contrast, the Ontario Greens are to be commended for their restraint in deciding not to try to influence the Ontario CA.

The Democratic Renewal Secretariat issued a backgrounder, of October 24, 2006, on The Electoral System Referendum Act, 2006. Not only does the referendum legislation reject any democratic

majority decision for change, but it also tells the Assembly what Electoral Systems are:

"Different electoral systems combine votes in different ways. All electoral systems have their strengths and weaknesses, and can have a significant impact on important features of our political landscape."

Another official press release by the Citizens Assembly Secretariat reported:

"Every electoral system has its strengths and weaknesses. Citizens Assembly members heard this message from seven of the world's leading experts in electoral reform..."

"The message that resonated throughout the day is that there's no perfect or one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to electoral systems. Assembly members were told that they must listen to Ontarians, discover what matters most to them, and understand the specific needs of the province in order to make a meaningful recommendation."

To say, there is no perfect or no one-size-fits-all solution, is not to say equivalent things at all. Newton theory of gravity is not a perfect system but it is very much a one-size-fits-all solution, as are any number of generally accepted scientific systems.

The brief merely asserts that there is no generally suitable voting system. But to deny it, on grounds that perfection is impossible, is no argument at all.

The briefs commit a paradox, because they assume they know the one right method, when they assert there is no one right method.

A result of this paradoxical point of view is that the academic role of neutrality towards the citizens assembly is not really as neutral as it might seem.

I am not saying the international experts views, as reported, were deliberately biased. I am not a mind reader and I was not there to hear all they said. But I am saying that neutrality is not a self-evident position. In fact, I would describe the reported experts alleged position, not as neutral towards voting systems, but as sceptical towards them.

It is proper for academics not to tell assembly members what system is the best to choose. It is another thing to tell them there is no best system, even if you must decline your opinion of what it is. Because, to say there is no best system is to rule out of consideration the possibility there has been scientific progress in an understanding of democratic electoral system. And that is not academically neutral, but merely the sceptical point of view.

There is also a progressive point of view, not represented in the briefing, it would seem. This is that people have been studying to improve election method ever since the French Enlightenment. The point of view, that elections are improvable over historical time, not merely re-designable to suit the moment, also deserves to be acknowledged and heard.

The assertion, no size-fits-all, meaning no generally applicable system, leads to nonsense. Different voting systems have different results that do matter. (There wouldnt be a mountainous double-60 referendum threshold against any new system, if the results didnt matter.)

The implication, that there is no definitive electoral system which people can agree truly represents their choice, would mean that

there is no definitively democratic voting system.

This denial of electoral democracy leaves only various ways of manipulating the electoral rules to get the results you want. The claim, that there is no general system, is an oligarchic view of elections, as arbitrary rules, such that, however people vote, the result will always reflect that bias of the system, rather than the voters free choices.

The Ontario Citizens Assembly is not being asked to research democratic voting system, so much as to find out how Ontarians want their voting system rigged for them. The Assembly, unlike the BC one, are in effect being initiated into a system-manipulation exercise in party-deferential voting systems.

The official Simulation even looks at STV from the party-fixated point of view that more seats per constituency means more representation for smaller parties. But it also means more representation for any smaller groups whatsoever, on any conceivable factors that the voters may rank as of importance: gender, age, race, religion, occupation, culture, language etc, or personal qualities of honesty and integrity, fairness, initiative, commitment, etc.

This wealth of preference opportunities to proportionally represent is unique to STV. Somewhat greater access, to that wealth, with larger constituencies, is the real message, that got lost in the merely partisan Simulation.

There is no perfect system, unfortunately, was also the false argument, for different voting systems for different institutions, that was used by the British Labour party Plant report (1992).

Plants recommendation excluded STV, the only system that works at all levels of government, for four other systems, to work at just some levels. The Plant reports adoption by the Labour government

resulted in electoral anarchy: Britain has half a dozen undemocratic voting methods where one democratic method would do.

There's no perfect voting system is a sorry excuse for the world chaos of voting methods, where hardly a country uses voting method consistently or in a principled fashion. Even the unreformed simple plurality countries, such as Canada, could not keep out some local multi-member constituencies. And countries, with proportional systems or not, mostly have to resort to exhaustive ballots for electing their party leaders or presidents.

Horses for courses have not led to progress in voting method over the past two hundred years. When Borda contested the Alternative Vote, with his method, and Condorcet contested Borda method, Laplace - only one of the half-dozen most respected mathematicians in human history - stepped-in to try to prove, which one was right.

(This is discussed in my chapter: Choice Voting America?)

The important point here is that these scientists were all agreed that there is such a thing as right and wrong method.

Electoral reform should not be a fashion statement.

Fifty years ago, certain American political scientists took over social choice theory, from economics, to prove the limitations of all such single member systems with preference voting, first examined by the great French filosoffs. On the strength of their proofs or theorems, they then made claims about the limitations of any democratic system.

This may be where the horses-for-courses attitude to elections comes from, amongst the academics who spoke to the Ontario Citizens Assembly.

Social choice theory grew up in the United States where single member elections are still the norm. But electoral method moved on after the filosoffs. In the mid-nineteenth century, Proportional

Representation was invented, also called Personal Representation by John Stuart Mill: Hare system combined preference voting with proportional counting - the origin of STV.

Mill thought it could be the saving of representative democracy.

Some of us still think so.

A century ago, HG Wells reviewed fifty years work since the days of Hare and Mill and stated that it had been shown beyond doubt that PR by STV is the one right way among any number of wrong ways to hold an election. The world-renowned voting specialists JFS Ross and Enid Lakeman continued this approach thru the subsequent years of the twentieth century.

One can make logical critiques against STV. Some have. (And one of the virtues of transferable voting is that it is open to improvement.) But electoral sceptics are really hoist with their own petard or caught in their own trap. The dilemma of the sceptics is that they have to establish a definitive voting system before they can then prove its deficiencies and therefore the deficiencies of electoral democracy.

Social choice theorists tried to have their cake and eat it. They took a half-baked kind of voting system, preference voting with over-all majority counting, and then made sweeping claims, against the rationality of democracy, which cannot be sustained on the basis of a system that is not rational or proportional, anyway.

You have to know the difference between right and wrong voting method before you can establish the current limitations of voting method. Rules always have limitations in practise. There is no doubt about that. But failure, to establish what the best rules of method are, results in failure to establish the limitations of the method.

Submission by Nick Loenen.

Submission 1094 from the pioneer Canadian reformer, Nick Loenen gets in many important points for his recommendation of STV. I expect that he was as conscious, as I was, of having to leave out things, including points already in his other writings. His submission scrupulously follows the guidelines. He tries to give an objective assessment of the relative merits of the contending systems, according to the criteria of the Select Committee on electoral reform. I think that his very attempt at rigor shows the weakness of a methodology based on eight principles, most of which are so sweeping that they have no obvious definition to agree on, as a basis for debate.

Hence, the decisions are inevitably subjective. And they depend on the generosity of the assessor, towards the respective voting methods, so that taking an average of such assessments would not produce a fair result.

It might encourage the kind of bias observed by Gary Duncan, in submission 1072.

The brief, A Preliminary Weighing of Principles, page 8, admits:

The former Select Committee on Electoral Reform (which recommended the eight principles that appear in the Citizens Assembly regulation) said this about effective government:

"Effective government is difficult to define, but most agree it includes being able to take decisive action when such is required...measuring the effectiveness of governments is already a...difficult and value-laden exercise, without taking the further step of connecting it with electoral models."

That's about right, therefore, taking that further step looks about as useful as tying tin cans to the departing wedding car of the citizens assembly.

The methodology of eight principles is like an obstacle course for electoral systems, which, in the name of fairness, places all the systems on an equal footing, as contestants in a race. Some of us are not so innocent of the relative merits of the different systems, which there are more objective ways to assess.

For example, there are four standard scales in measurement theory. Only one electoral system possesses all four scales of measurement, in its unique combination of preference vote and proportional count. That is STV. No other electoral system, in use, has more than two measurement scales. (This and the philosophy of science applied to voting methods is in my sequel book: Scientific Method of Elections.)

The need to keep to tried and tested voting method.

Hand-counted STV is accurate enough, and retains the Ontario Citizens Assembly desire for a relatively simple and transparent system. This would seem to rule out computer-counted STV (Meek method) recently introduced into some New Zealand local elections and for health boards. I have no objection to it, but I can see the wisdom of progressing to a hands-on count of STV for Ontario, should that system be the choice of the Assembly.

Meek method is used in Britain by the London Mathematical Society, the Computer Society and the Statistical Society. So, STV, being capable of increased levels of rigor, does find acceptance in organisations with exacting scientific standards.

Having studied the matter, I believe that bigger improvements than Meek method are possible, but these would further increase the amount of computation, and are well outside the scope of this inquiry.

I mention the fact, only because there are innumerable submissions to the Ontario Citizens Assembly that seem to assume we don't know that even the best of established methods has perceptible shortcomings. They then propose innovations, to every conceivable voting method, that don't have any track record, expecting the Ontario legislature to submit itself to an electoral experiment.

Also, the official Simulations of different voting methods, for the citizens assembly, may foster the impression that voting methods are like Fashion House models that you can design and redesign and turn out, at will, according to taste.

This was partly the reason why Britain's so-called Independent Inquiry on Voting Systems, the Jenkins report failed. They proposed an untried system, Alternative Vote Top-up, a Mixed Member Proportional system with the Alternative Vote, or 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc choices in the single member constituencies, and an X-vote for small open lists.

Consequently, experts (and myself) identified failings, both new and old, with it.

Backed by the UK Electoral Reform Society and Proportional Representation Society of Australia, traditional STV has over a hundred years of practise behind it, under-going continual revisions in its rule-books to take account of every contingency that experience has shown can crop up in the course of a transferable voting count.

As the assembly's advisors say, no system is perfect. But that doesn't prevent transferable voting from being incomparably better than all

the non-transferable voting systems. Traditional STV remains the state of the art in practical politics. It best balances, or trades-off, justice with simplicity.

The fallacy of pre-emptive voting methods.

[To top.](#)

The fallacy of pre-emptive or presumptive voting methods is that they confuse the act of voting choice with choice of a voting method. The culprits are all the voting systems that presume a vote is for a party, in the proportional count. This means that whether voters are partisan or not, they are presumed to be, so that the election has essentially been decided as partisan before it has even been held.

The presumption of the party vote, for the purposes of an exclusively partisan proportional count, introduces an artificial restriction of choice on the voters before they have even made their choice in the polling booth. Nor does this partisan bias, in the name of proportion, end there.

The official briefing, Mixed Systems Simulated Election Results, is an exercise in all the subsequent biases that have to be arbitrarily decided once the initial arbitrary decision to pre-empt an election for partisanship has been made.

The Simulation boils down to the different ways that any given election can be biased one way or the other towards bigger or smaller parties, namely by whether the list places compensate the smaller parties for fewer single seat wins; or whether there are more single members than list members; or how proportional the count formula is; or the level of the threshold percentage of the votes, a party must win, before being given a proportional share of the seats.

So, having elected or chosen an electoral system that is partisan, despite the democratic right to be other than partisan, if one wishes, a whole series of further arbitrary decisions must be made that will affect the fortunes of big versus small parties.

Such a series of arbitrary decisions can not belong to logically justifiable electoral system, but to the kinds of subjective choices that voters must make in an actual election, and for which subjective purposes, of individual judgment, elections are held.

Electoral rules, affecting the balance between big versus small parties, are an echo of the false distinction between majority counting and proportional counting. As explained, above, there is no essential difference of principle between the two: STV shows a proportional count to be a multi-majority count. Thus, favoring the larger parties, in the name of majority, and favoring the smaller parties, in the name of proportion, is a false dichotomy.

There is no real issue, only a fictitious issue, between systematic favoring of big or small parties. It is like Gullivers Travels and the war of the big-enders versus the little-enders, over how they opened their eggs. Electoral systems, that are more or less big-end systems or little-end systems, trap the participants in a futile dispute.

Jonathan Swift says that eventually some genius came up with the idea of toleration for which-ever way of opening ones egg one pleased. In electoral terms, that depends on an electoral system that is removed from all the Mixed system considerations of big or little party bias. And indeed which doesnt make an issue out of this, any more than any number of other ways, that voters might choose to differentiate the candidates.

STV can show that voters are not nearly as inflexibly partisan as partisan counting makes them out to be. We do know from STV that voters are usually partisan, because this system does not presume

what one is setting out to prove in the electoral test.

This rule of non-presumptive proof, by the way, is one of the first principles one learns in the philosophy of science.

Another first principle, in the philosophy of science, is that of an unambiguous test. This rule is failed by the single member system, which is ambiguous as to whether a vote for the single representative was for him as an individual or merely as a party nomination. STV passes the rule of an unambiguous test, because voters can prefer candidates of the same party, so that one knows whether the individual is favored or just his party.

Indeed, STV can test for candidates of a standing that goes beyond their party, if they belong one, when voters of all political colors extend their higher preferences to a candidate of national standing, a veritable leader of her country.

Submission by Graham Kelly.

Just as it took a submission (to the BC CA) of a German, to make a sober assessment of the German MMP system, it takes a New Zealander to make a sober assessment of the New Zealand version. Graham Kelly, former MP returned before and after the reform to the MMP system, is now the NZ High Commissioner to Canada.

He does not pretend to be enthusiastic about MMP and, I dare say, would not weep if New Zealanders reverted to the old system. But I do think that he tries to be objective and factual about the reform. There is no point in repeating his evidence here, beyond a few points.

New Zealanders were so eager to get rid of first past the post, that they resorted to voting tactically for MMP, to avoid splitting the reform

vote amongst four different options, in a simple plurality referendum. This expose is on page six of his submission.

Pages 6 to 7 belie the claim, made by some submissions, that voters would find MMP easy to understand. These findings of confusion and ignorance are even more marked in the Richard Commission for Welsh elections and the Arbuthnott commission for Scottish elections. (These reports are reviewed in my second book, in the Democracy Science series, Scientific Method of Elections.)

The most telling fact may be that, since the referendum, passing MMP against first past the post, support for MMP remains only slightly greater than for FPTP, suggesting it is a case of FPTP being more disliked than of MMP being liked.

The CA learning brief, Values and the electoral system change in New Zealand, admitted some traditional democratic values were down-played, including (on page 14):

"Government formation more difficult and in the hands of the parliamentary parties rather than the voters. More difficult to throw the rascals out."

The brief also admits: Some disapproval of list MPs and dual candidacy.

Dual candidacy is the MMP double safety net for incumbents, who reserve a place on a party list in case they lose their seats.

David Farrell, in the learning brief, Electoral Reform in Established Democracies, pointed out that electoral reform was generally run by the political elite (top down). This is like sporting contestants being their own referees. He mentioned the emphasis on party for voting reform in New Zealand.

Actually, I believe criterion 9 in the terms of reference to the New Zealand Royal Commission on Electoral Systems is unconstitutional:

"Effective parties (voting systems should recognise role played by parties in the policy and representative process);"

Political parties were not recognised in the British constitution from which New Zealand political institutions arise. Only with the introduction of list systems did you get official parties. Criterion 9 seems to have been a device to handicap STV, whose proportional count is not exclusively partisan. Yet political parties were not recognised in Britains and New Zealands then voting system of Simple Plurality. A precept, that effectively rules out the historical system, before it has been decided to change it, cannot be legitimate.

Taking this consideration of unconstitutional prejudice, together with the simple plurality referendum, that Graham Kelly likened to a migration of lemmings, I think there is a case for impugning the validity of the New Zealand electoral reform consultation.

More on credulity towards experts.

I'm not accusing Eileen Wennekers (1124) of credulity. Indeed, I commend her submission, but she was the one who noted that a standing international survey of elections stated that STV and party lists are the only two pure kinds of proportional elections.

Well, this is an improvement on likening voting methods to makes of cars (Citizens Talking to Citizens, page 3) as if voting methods are all politicly road-worthy to some professor Pangloss of voting methods. (One of the briefings even has a full color page of different autos.)

But the source, she cites, is still wrong.

As H G Wells said, voting method is not a matter of opinion but a matter of demonstration. And it is easy to show that party lists are inconsistent and deficient as proportional elections.

Party Lists are supposed to remove the disproportionate results of first past the post, but they only revive these disproportionate results on each party list. For, Open Lists elect several candidates, by simple plurality, on the list, according to how many seats the party-proportional count allocates them.

Free Lists actually give only minimal ranking power with a measure of cumulative voting. And Closed Lists simply abolish individual representation and accountability. You don't solve problems by getting rid of them.

STV is the only consistently or truly proportional system, because not confined to party divisions but transcending them. It has been explained, above, that STV consistently gives PR, not only between parties, but also within parties and across parties. And STV gives PR without parties, in non-political elections.

In sum, STV alone is principled proportional representation thru and thru.

Party lists only give a proportional count to particular groups. Party lists give proportional partisanship. This proportional particularism favors fairness alone to one set of groups in society, the parties, at the expense of everyone else. The voters are put in a role of deference to the parties, with party votes - not voters votes.

A weakness of an official characterisation of elections is that the tension between rulers and ruled are played down. The Select Committee on electoral reform (seemingly influenced by the lamentable Plant report) directed for effective parties, effective

parliament and effective government, but it didn't direct for effective voters. And it is remedying ineffective voting system which this exercise is supposed to be all about.

Ontario has a Minister and Secretariat for Democratic Renewal but Democratic Renewal of the electoral system, as a more democratic system, rather than a new fashion statement, is not conspicuous in the reference terms or directives to the Citizens Assembly on electoral systems.

Frankly, it was refreshing to hear, from one submission (1157), an enfant terrible, crying out that the emperor has no clothes. I could relate his allegations of Ontario Party Politics to top-down British government.

Others, less out-spoken, about party hegemony, included submissions (1019) (1066) (1086) (1167) no doubt amongst more.

Farewell.

[To top.](#)

Various party controls of voting systems make for ineffective and frustrated voters. It is the power behind the whipping system that stifles informed public debate in parliament. And it allows governments to become wooden-headed puppets determined lobbyists fortunes prevail at all costs to the public welfare.

In trying to prove to you that STV is a necessary, tho not sufficient, remedy, I'm sorry, dear Ontario Citizens Assembly, referendum voters, international experts, secretariat, parliament and government, if I have treated you all like Babes in the Wood, but the only

advantage of being an old timer on electoral reform is in what one has seen before.

The choice is yours, whether, in all official elections, the voting system is for the voters or the parties.

Appendix 1: on some mistakes in the brief

[To top.](#)

Most of these mistakes may be just careless but you cannot afford to be careless in reaching the right decision on voting method.

The Ontario CA brief wrongly states of a simple plurality winner that: most popular candidate wins in each district. (The plurality family of electoral systems, page 6.)

Comment: For the brief to *define*, as most popular, the candidate, who is first past the post, is no defense. That candidate may not be most popular, if most popular is defined by first past the post. The withdrawal of a losing candidate might put a different candidate first past the post. Any winner, short of an over-all majority, has no first past the post claim to be most popular.

[P.S. In an effective or logical voting system, the withdrawal of a rival candidate should not harm the prospects of the leading candidate. If social choice theorists can contrive, in marginal and hypothetical instances to stigmatise STV with jargon like "non-monotonic," why cannot mote-in-your-eye academics agree the common-place truth

that FPTP is logicly unacceptable because removing rivals may remove a candidates lead.]

In Citizens Talking to Citizens, page 8:

"With Alternative Vote, voters indicate not only their favourite candidate - their first preference - but also a second choice, a third choice, and so on."

Comment: This sentence assumes that X-voters indicate only their first preference. And that Alternative Vote merely gives them a chance to express lower preferences. But it may also allow some voters to indicate their first preference, for the first time, without having to vote tacticly or strategicly, on lesser against least preferences, for fear of wasting their votes on first or higher preferences.

This point relates to the former point that plurality winners may not be the most popular and is a frequent complaint, as in Ontario submissions (1010, 1037, 1041, 1044, 1168, 1177, 1178, 1179 and more) showing painful awareness that plurality voting with an X-vote is not necessarily a first preference. The assembly briefers are aware of it too. Never the less, this mistake got thru.

There is a mistake in Electoral systems appendix A:

"Proportional formula - Electoral formulas and systems in which seats are allocated to parties in proportion to the shares of votes that the parties receive."

Comment: Even the experts let slip the popular fallacy that PR must mean a spoils system of sharing out seats for party votes. No wonder this is the assumption that many submissions do not see anything wrong with. Indeed, they think it would be better than two main parties getting the lions share of seats.

Apart from this quoted error, I grant that the main official texts usually just speak of vote share roughly equal to seat share. But when the briefs meant party votes for party seats, perhaps they should say so, even if it seems obvious from the context of dealing with party lists.

It is decisive that the Assembly should be clear about the difference between elections of proportionally representative individuals and the proportional election of parties or groups. Proportional representation need not be, and originally was not, merely a partisan sharing out of seats for votes. In fact, my above section, on Choices of Count, derived proportional representation without any reference to parties at all. That is the proper way to do it.

The guide document, Citizens Talking to Citizens (page 10; see also appendix A to Proportional systems, glossary) mentions Free lists, as in Switzerland: Voters may vote for and rank any of the candidates.

Comment: With so-called Free lists, voters don't have a ranked choice, in other words, a preference vote. It is a gross exaggeration to say voters can rank any of the candidates. They only have cumulative voting, which gives token discrimination between candidates. And, as it happens, the cumulative voting in Switzerland is itself very limited.

In short, Free lists scarcely begin to give voters the power to rank choice of all candidates, that a preference vote does.

Mixed systems appendix A, Glossary: Vote splitting.

"...For political parties in multi-member districts (particularly in Single Transferable Vote systems), vote splitting involves the possibility that voters may divide their votes between two candidates of the same party, thereby decreasing the likelihood that either will be elected."

Comment: On enquiry, I found this was not a criticism of the Senatorial Rules. But it is still wrong, as is shown by practical examples given in the Principled Recommendation section, above.

It is the transferability of the vote that prevents vote splitting. Plurality counting splits voting between individual candidates, whether in single member constituencies, or on an open list where there is PR between parties but no PR *within* parties.

Votes also split between group candidates on separate party lists, because the PR is only between parties, not *across* parties: In Ulster Euro-elections, the transferability of the vote *saved* the nationalist vote from splitting, as it would split between two party lists, each party list vote, alone, being short of the required proportion for representation.

Appendix 2: on a further unconstitutional veto effected by the double-60 referendum threshold.

[To top.](#)

I realise that the referendum threshold is not in the Citizens Assembly terms of reference. But it will not go away after the sessions have ended and some members may still be involved in its consequences. So, it is convenient to refer to it here.

I don't want to repeat here the legal case made fully by Patrick Boyer QC arguing that referendums in British Columbia and Canada in general have generally been decided by an over-all majority. And that social convention, which law follows, deems that the threshold is not compatible with Canada as a free and democratic society.

As British Columbian, Brian White said, the double-60 threshold is a veto on the democratic decision. It is undemocratic in giving disproportionate weight to votes against change: it breaks the basic rule, one person one vote.

I might mention the claim that the double-60 threshold means as few as forty per cent of the electorate could block a vote for electoral change.

But the point I want to make is that the Ontario government and legislature may further be charged with unconstitutional procedure, if it is seen to be discriminatory in the way it receives the assembly's choice of system. If the government and legislature stood by the threshold against STVs democratic voting system, that would confirm its prejudice.

But suppose the Citizens Assembly were to choose a party-centred system, and the parties in the legislature decided to waive the full threshold. Then that would look like Ontario parties were working the threshold as a further unconstitutional veto on what voting method Ontarians are allowed to have. And all under the guise of a popular decision.

References.

[To top.](#)

The Ontario CA has been lectured on values-driven electoral reform. With the tight schedule set the Ontario Citizens Assembly, and as it is only back-ground, I did not urge they read my philosophic answer to this topic on my Democracy Science web-page:

The Moral Sciences as the Ethics of Scientific Method.

My electoral research pages, such as on weighted Condorcet pairing, were definitely *not* recommended reading for the practical purpose of a Citizens Assembly.

Finally, if members of the Ontario Citizens Assembly had any doubts about the rights and wrongs of electoral system, as here or elsewhere presented, I said I would be glad to respond to their questions.

In the event, the rushed scheduling of Ontario CA left hardly any time for out-side evidence.

November to December 2006.

Edited april 2015.

[To top.](#)

Ontario Citizens Assembly and due process for future assemblies.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Links to sections:

1. Political [Interference](#).
2. Compliant, unrepresentative and inaccurate [briefing](#).
3. [Assimilation time](#) denied for submissions; other pre-emptive scheduling.

[Some STV submissions](#) to the Ontario Citizens Assembly.

On 18 february 2007, the Ontario Citizens Assembly voted by 80% for a Mixed Member Proportional system. Another 6% supported the weaker Parallel version of this system. 3% supported a party proportional List system. The MMP system is made up partly of a party proportional vote for List members and partly single members as under the existing First Past the Post system. Only 8% supported the Single Transferable Vote, which uses a

proportional count of preference votes, and 3% supported the Alternative Vote, which uses a majority count of preference votes.

The Assembly next goes on to design their favored form of MMP and that will be put to another vote against the current FPTP system. There is no doubt that MMP will win that vote, given that proportionality was the most important single issue to Assembly members from the out-set. It was also by far the most supported system from the thousand or so submissions to the Assembly web-site.

In a democracy, people have the right to make mistakes. And I have no problem with any decision properly arrived at - reasonably properly. It is not the decision I question, tho I think it is wrong, but the way that decision was arrived at. So, I would like to present some evidence of lack of due process to the Ontario Citizens Assembly. The main import of this is for how any future Citizens Assemblies may be run, on electoral reform or any other issue.

The main value of the Ontario CA process has been as a warning on fair play. The warnings are as follows:

1. Political Interference.

[To top](#)

The Ontario Assembly was supposed to be a Citizens Assembly but the politicians couldnt let go of it. They had to be in first with a Select Committee on electoral reform representing three main Ontario parties. As if we were in any danger of forgetting them and their needs. Their report was criticised for bias towards MMP and against

STV. See Wikipedia: Citizens Assembly on electoral reform (Ontario).

Moreover, the SC insisted on lumbering the CA with a directive of 8 principles, so-called. This rag-bag, of relevance and irrelevance, included vastly vague themes like "effective government," which even the committee virtually admitted was a conundrum. There was no particular merit in the directive.

Anyone could have made up their own, just as good or bad. It seems the directive was made simply for the sake of directing. It would not do to let the assembly start thinking for itself on principles, as the British Columbia CA was left to do.

Also in BC, the politicians kept away from the CA. But in Ontario, from the beginning, the CA was lectured by representatives of the three main parties. I saw a report of some other VIP also giving a talk. I don't know how many such VIP visits there were. But I don't see why powerful, wealthy or influential people, who already have their own platforms, should be given star treatment at what is supposed to be a citizens assembly. A citizens assembly should give no more access to big-wigs than any other citizens.

However, the British Columbia government was responsible for one gross interference in the outcome, with the double sixty per cent threshold for a referendum. Ontario CA were rudely surprised in the middle of their endeavors to find Ontario government had copied this dodge.

Future citizens assemblies will have to have a guarantee from their governments that they do not make up the rules as they go along. No competent lawyer would allow a private contract to be drawn up in that unprofessional manner. All conditions will have to be settled before the assembly is called, not during or after it.

Then again, the BC government did not make a precedent for the Ontario government to come up with, what I call, the official line on elections. For instance, the Ontario government tagged the official line onto the announcement of the double threshold. In so many words, they said that all voting systems had legitimate purposes and you just chose the one with the advantages that the locals favored.

This is only an opinion. It was not a demonstrated truth, or even a demonstrable truth. There was no reason why the Citizens Assembly should pay any particular heed to it, over and above any other opinion. The government was just using or abusing its authority to impose an official line, treating the assembly like any parliament that is down-trodden by its executive.

2. Compliant, unrepresentative and inaccurate briefing.

[To top](#)

According to the CA Secretariat press release, international experts held views that coincided with the official line. Namely, that all voting systems had their advantages and disadvantages and the CA had to trade these off against each other, paying attention to public priorities. On this information, both the politicians and the academics were agreed that there was no right answer to this problem.

My submission called this general academic advice skeptical. Skepticism implies you are denying whether there is such a thing, for instance, as truth. It might be more accurate to describe the official position not so much skeptical as benighted, since the very notion of right and wrong was banished from the whole briefing.

Benighted, in the sense of lost in moral and intellectual darkness. Voting methods were reduced to a fashion parade for the province. This does not properly represent the history of electoral reform and research.

(Some STV submissions are mentioned at the end of this page.)

The Ontario official briefing focused on greater or lesser proportionality according to how it advantaged small or big parties. Even STV was treated in this particular way, tho its proportionality serves all groups, with social attributes that voters significantly prefer. You could have been forgiven for believing that STV proportional representation was incidental to its also providing proportional partisanship.

The briefing re-inforced the popular fallacy that proportional representation means implicitly proportions of seats for votes *to the parties*.

So, it is perhaps explicable in terms of their briefing why the Citizens Assembly chose proportional voting for the parties as a first principle when they met in three groups for the 18 february vote on an alternative voting system.

The assembly was more likely to take notice of the professionals advice, who have more status than the outsiders sending in submissions. Moreover, the experts were picked for being able to get on with people. Not your Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger, then. The experts had the advantage of being able to bond with members and be able to offer any assistance, on the spot. Who then needs to make e-mail enquiries to some strangers sending in submissions?

There was an occasionally irksome and by turns laughable tendency, in one or two cases, for gushing gratitude from the enthusiasm of undiscerning youth, for these wizards of electioneering lore to share their amazing expertise with the vulgar.

If anyone reads this page, they may wonder: How dare he criticise these academics just doing their job?

Well, there is nothing new here on the role of social scientists. For fifty years, political science or sociology, for example, have studiously contributed less than one could believe possible to democratic progress. Some of them have been eruditely denying there is such a thing.

Mind you, David Farrell brief showed that for the few countries that use STV in political elections, the number of political scientists, who favor it, is disproportionately large. Tho, most of them favor MMP, the more common model, if you ignore their unlimited variety.

The BC CA was criticised because their main advisor was supposed to be partial to STV. The chairman of Ontario CA sought to neutralise this criticism by appointing a professor with no published record on electoral systems. But this was jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.

What is the point of having an expert advisor who is not an expert in the relevant problem? Neither he, nor his panel of supporting experts, bothered, for instance, to give the up-to-date version of the Droop quota, for STV. That is supposing they knew it. It's a minor point in itself but it casts doubt on the value of their authority. Ironically, the official monopolists on truth denied there was such a thing as true voting system. Or rather they didnt mention the very idea of right or wrong lest it give anyone ideas to go look for it, electorally.

It might be more honest to have protagonists for the various view-points and let the assembly see them slug it out between each other. That is with independent submissions allowed to take a full and unhurried part in the deliberations.

The Ontario CA omitted the BC CA invitation of seven selected outsiders for a final debate. MMP supporters claimed STV was too well represented in this line-up. While not necessarily agreeing with this, I do think that any future assemblies should have a series of such court-room style debates, in which the usual voting systems are all as well represented in argument as their protagonists can make them. This was one more way of getting at the truth that the assembly procedure did not avail itself of. Its absence contributed to the down-graded status of external submissions, mostly put on-line perfunctorily before the CA vote on alternate systems.

The local consultation meetings provided some scope for debate but these were only local and often poorly attended. I gather (from one written submission already mentioned in my own submission) they could be attended mainly by a group of people all in one frame of mind. Politicians were sometimes present and predictably they favored that politicians PR, the doubly safe-seat system, Mixed Member Proportional.

Court room proceedings can be reduced to Dickensian farces. But provided abuses are guarded against, they could provide insight otherwise lacking from official briefings.

I remember long ago, a British radio broadcast called: You the Jury. The audience listened to a court case on proportional representation. One of the witnesses for STV may have used it but not been accustomed to debates about it. He had been picked because he was a prominent worthy, who was indeed an estimable man, to bolster support from the center left.

The prosecution used the old lawyer trick of intimidating a witness. And he was an old lawyer and Tory MP. He said to the witness ominously, words to the effect: Do *you* know the wrong things this system (meaning STV) can lead to?

The witness was suddenly unsure of himself and feebly took the escape route that no system was perfect. And the prosecution won his case against STV without saying a single thing against it. Moral: call specialist witnesses who are specialists and can think on their feet.

The defense for PR refused to recommend one system. They had another witness for the Additional/Mixed Member System. This indecisiveness weakened their case and their audience support had slightly fallen back by the end of the program. By the way, this points a moral to the whole Fair Votes campaign in Britain, the original of the Fair Votes campaigns in English-speaking countries.

And Canadas Fair Votes campaign appears to be laboring under this ambiguity also. They cannot agree on the best PR system to replace First Past The Post.

The reason for this, in Britain and presumably in Canada, was not because the problem could not be solved democratically. Apparently, other motives were at work. And the public are given pause to wonder whether Britains or Canadas reform campaigns, where they are ambiguous, are all they are democratically cracked up to be.

3. Assimilation time denied for submissions; other pre-emptive scheduling.

[To top](#)

There was complaint, including from Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette, at one CA consultation meeting, about there not being time to inform and educate the public enough for a referendum on electoral reform. Lisa Tallyn, writing for The Georgetown

Independent on 6 december 2006, cited another audience member as saying: the citizens assembly was set up to fail.

What I'm suggesting here is that the Citizens Assembly itself didnt have time to do its job properly.

British Columbia CA allowed eight to nine months for submissions to be entered, allowing for over-run. This amounted to no more than three and a half months for Ontario CA. Even this conceals the complete inadequacy of the time allowed for the Citizens Assembly to assimilate the independent evidence.

I am well aware of this, because I followed the six week-ends of briefings to the CA. There was a time lag before the briefings were put on-line. The last was not put up till just before Christmas. It was not humanly possible to post a submission, that comprehended the complete briefing course, before about 23 december 2006, my posting date. Then, of course, everyone went on holiday and my submission did not go on-line till early january.

My submission was number 1207. For some unknown reason, the submissions started at 1001. There were also serial submitters, so I was considerably less than the two-hundredth person to make a submission. In all, there were about one thousand submissions. That means that the great bulk of submissions, eight hundred plus or over eighty per cent, were only available to the assembly, for reading and debating, from january up to mid february, as they were still being put up.

Then, incredibly, the Ontario Citizens Assembly makes its crucial voting decision on 18 february 2007. No way could they have possibly assimilated that mass of independent evidence in so short a time. Remember, that's scarcely a week or two after the consultation

closed. That just gives the assembly a few week-ends to meet and discuss what theyve found.

There's over a hundred assembly members. It takes time for all those people to circulate and for any independent views to make headway against the conventional wisdom. As H G Wells said: "New ideas do not come suddenly. Wars do."

According to comments posted on research by Andre Blais, it took three months for 22% of BC CA to prefer STV; seven months for 28%; before the final 72% after a year. (Actually the BC CA vote was 80% for STV versus MMP.)

The Ontario CA had scarcely a month to come to terms with STV. So, as commentator "Olaf" said, the Ontario 8% support for STV is consistent with the BC CA learning curve.

The assembly schedule also did not allow the members the proverbial: look before you leap. The vote on alternative systems was taken before they were allowed to design the system they were choosing. The members didnt even know what they were voting for.

The BC assembly found that it had to decide between considerably more options for MMP than for STV. These options cannot be decided on principle. In fact, the BC CA gave up deciding what to do with all the ad hoc questions involved with MMP. They just went onto the vote for alternative systems, and promised themselves theyd come back later, if MMP won.

It is hard to believe that the Ontario assembly schedulers didnt know what they were doing when they so arranged that members werent allowed a taste of their own medicine before voting for it. It's incompetant procedure, anyway, that the assembly should choose a system before trying it.

Given such pre-emptive scheduling and the governments effective imposition of a parliamentary guillotine on time to consult independent submissions, was there anything the assembly could realistically have done?

There was one out-standing issue that cropped up in the submissions from the beginning. This was "strategic voting," as Canadians call it, or tactical voting, as it is known in Britain. I cited a few examples, in my submission, tho it came before the bulk of them. Time after time, writers complained of their being denied a real choice, if they didnt want to waste their vote.

Alright, this issue may have been second in occurence to the demand for proportional representation. But it was still probably the second most frequently cited grumble. You have to remember that the demand for PR was organised mainly by smaller parties and pressure groups. There was a band-wagon effect, making it the conventional wisdom of the day.

The "strategic voting" complaint came more from the personal experience of individual voters. Some commented on a long life time of voting frustration. Admittedly, it is true that some of them thought some form of PR the answer and maybe MMP, at that.

The facts are otherwise. As a submission, by Andrew Jehan, on the need for ranked ballots, said, MMP leaves strategic voting unsolved. The single members are elected as before. And even with a second X-vote for a party list, the voter still has to consider whether the vote for his favorite party will be wasted, if it cannot pass the threshold. Reasons for this may be that the party has just started up and is not wealthy enough to generate the publicity to get widely known and supported, however admirable the causes espoused.

Of course, Ontario Citizens Assembly members are likely to resent any suggestion that they have been manipulated, firstly by an official line of electoral skepticism, by politicians apparently largely endorsed by academics. And that they have not had the time to take in independent dissent from the popular fallacy that PR means seats in proportion to votes for parties.

Well, I have been at their address. I still remember as a young man how I parroted all the conventional wisdoms of the day, as if they were my very own views on voting method.

Never the less, every adult has the right to be treated as one. And allowing for all the handicaps placed in their way, even if they don't themselves recognise them, it still has to be asked: what exactly has the Ontario Citizens Assembly done for the citizens of Ontario after five months of shenanigans before the crucial vote, on alternative systems, was taken?

As the song says, "What the world needs now is love, sweet love, no, not just for some but for everyone."

Well, the assembly have acted as brokers for small party incumbency with MMP. But they did nothing to remove strategic voting. They did nothing for everyone. Not everyone wants to be partisan man. Representative democracy is not an out-moded concept.

British Columbia Citizens Assembly has resonated round the world. Tho there may not be another one in Canada, after Ontario, I feel sufficiently sure that there will be others.

However, the BC and Ontario experiences afford two good examples of HOW TO DO IT and, as Dickens would say, HOW NOT TO DO IT.

There must be enough time for the assembly to learn and deliberate: one year. Anything less is not enough for a major constitutional controversy, like voting reform, the very basis of government power. This is a perfectly reasonable demand. When you go on a qualifying course, it is normal to expect anything from one to three years (or even longer in some cases). When a Royal Commission is called, it generally takes at least one year to gather evidence, call witnesses, and prepare its report.

Britains Royal Commission on the Constitution took three years to produce the Kilbrandon report. (I think it was three and a half years, in which case it took three years longer than the Ontario Citizens Assembly.) They mainly examined devolution but, against their terms of reference, they unanimously insisted on the need for STV in Britains devolved national or regional governments. So, had BC CA stayed on another two years plus, it is unlikely they would have changed their minds about STV. In any case, a number of their alumni continue their work.

Moreover, the personnel of government enquiries normally include specialists in the field. But a Citizens Assembly is made up of the general public. So, you are bound to expect the learning curve to be slow to rise at first. That is the typical pattern of learning, slowly gathering pace.

Like a jig-saw puzzle, you dont know where all the pieces go at first but it gradually gets more obvious. The Ontario learning curve was cut off before it had time to gain the main benefits of the exercise.

Some STV submissions to the Ontario Citizens Assembly.

[To top](#)

These references are not complete. Apologies to those I've missed out. On the other hand, I'm not sure that all those mentioned here would be pleased to be associated with my views. And I don't claim to represent their views.

I've already discussed the lack of even a hint of science in the briefing, in my submission 1207, which is now also in this book, as: STV elections, not single member exclusions nor list appointments.

Ontario CA briefing inaccuracies, some very simple and obvious, all misleading, were given in appendix 1. There was supposed to be a panel - a barrage, even - of experts to check for mistakes.

All I can say is, on their mistake-spotting, they were not value for their professional services.

I anticipated the answer to the academic position of "value-driven electoral reform," on my Democracy Science web-page: The moral sciences as the ethics of scientific method.

In the first of two submissions, I was amused at the naivety, if he'll pardon me for saying so, of a Simon Fraser University physics professor, John Huntley, who studied STV after BC CA chose it. He says he very quickly found that STV was so obviously the best choice that he expected everyone to vote for it. Then he found out otherwise and put much effort into promoting it. His second submission, a joint one, might eventually have had some effect, had it been given ample time to filter thru into the Ontario CA consciousness.

Ryan Fugger on "STV: Frequently Asked Questions," and Douglas Woodard: PR-STV are two substantial and admirably lucid introductions.

James Gilmour of FairShare, the Scottish electoral reform campaign,

is essential reading from a real expert. Gilmour has been working on the introduction of STV for Scottish local elections in 2007. Gilmours account is searching but accessible.

Ken Ritchie submission for the Electoral Reform Society, is from his British counter-part.

Bogey Musidlak, president of the Australian Proportional Representation Society gave the experience of the country with the earliest use of STV in political elections.

Craig Henschel was one of the former British Columbia Citizens Assembly members, whose submissions knowledgeably communicated their enthusiasm for STV.

There was a fairly brief but out-standing submission, comparing STV to MMP, from someone too modest to give their name to their document: Electoral Reform in Ontario - The need for change/ options for change.

Despite calling STV, the Standard Transferable Vote, Reva Landau gives another fairly brief but good submission.

The technical excellence of Jamie Deith submission, however, is for those who've come to readily understand STV.

Even Janice Murray, bless her, of the Marxist-Leninist party of Canada has a kind word to say about not ignoring the BC CA decision for STV, because of "the negative portrayal of it in the media and by various politicians."

26 february 2007.

[To top](#)

"One Ballot. Two Votes." as a premature report: Two Wrongs don't make One Right.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Links to sections:

A report belonging to the fiction shelves?

Why was it [a premature report](#)?

[Final remarks](#).

A report belonging to the fiction shelves?

"To the very young, to school-teachers, as also to those who compile textbooks about constitutional history, politics, and current affairs, the world is a more or less rational place. They visualise the election of representatives freely chosen from among those the people trust. They picture the process by which the wisest and best of these become ministers of state. They imagine how captains of industry, freely elected by shareholders, choose for managerial responsibility those who have proved their ability in a humbler role."

"Books exist in which assumptions such as these are boldly stated or tacitly implied. To those, on the other hand, with any experience of affairs, these assumptions are merely ludicrous. Solemn conclaves of the wise and good are mere figments of the teacher's mind. It is

salutary, therefore, if an occasional warning is uttered on this subject."

"Heaven forbid that students should cease to read books on the science of public or business administration -- provided only that these works are classified as fiction. Placed between the novels of Rider Haggard and H G Wells, intermingled between volumes about ape men and space ships, these textbooks could harm no one. Placed elsewhere, among works of reference, they can do more damage than might at first sight seem possible."

C Northcote Parkinson.

On 15 May 2007, the Ontario Citizens Assembly produced its recommendation for electoral reform. ("One Ballot. Two Votes." Hence, 1B2V.)

There is no way of knowing whether Parkinson would have included "One Ballot. Two Votes." in the fiction section of library classifications. On the claims it makes, I have no hesitation in so doing. Bear in mind a few of the following quotes:

Voter choice. (From page 6.)

"Voters have both quantity and quality of choice on the ballot."

Comment: Highly misleading.

Voters have *either* a minimum of quantity choice *or* a minimum of quality choice. They do not have both *together*. The quantity vote for a party only offers a minimum of quantity choice, because only one group in society, the party politicians, benefit from the proportional count. All the infinite variety of society to proportionally represent is excluded for the pretend PR of proportional partisanship, in a mostly

unpartisan society.

The so-called quality vote only allows a minimal choice of monopolised representation in a single member constituency.

"Voters should be able to indicate both their preferred candidate and their preferred party." (p.7.)

Comment: This is a fiction about the chosen voting method. The two X-votes actually restrict voters, in both votes, to a minimum of one (non-transferable) preference. And this over-looks that the one preference option may have to sacrifice a first preference for strategic voting.

Moreover, both votes are at cross-purposes with respect to individual and partisan choice.

Strategic or tactical voting considerations enter into First Past The Post. This was a frequent complaint of submissions.

Less well known is that party list votes, being single-preference votes, are also beset by split voting of majorities letting minorities win. Party list systems are supposed to be party proportional but that is a fiction, when a winning proportion of (non-transferable) votes are split, between two parties on similar platforms.

Simplicity and practicality of MMP (p.10) is another fiction.

By an unkind coincidence, the Ontario Citizens Assembly reports came out, at the time of the Scottish parliament elections with MMP. This was held with just the sort of ballot paper recommended by the CA. That is one ballot, two votes, to quote their reports very title.

In the previous two elections, the Scottish parliament gave two ballot papers: one for the constituency and another for the list. After all,

they are two different systems, with two different aims, even if you combine their results to compose a single legislature.

Anyone who had heeded the Welsh and Scottish parliament reports, chaired by Lord Richard and by Arbuthnott, would have known popular bewilderment towards MMP. But its doctrinaires make a point of not knowing, perhaps sensing this is a weakness to cover up.

Anyway, the British media had a field day with the hundred thousand spoilt ballot papers for the Scottish parliament. (It turned out later there were 142,000.) They didn't fail to mention that one area had 12% spoilt papers. This was untypical. The average rate appears to have been 3.5%.

There is to be an official enquiry.

Against the Arbuthnott commission advice, the politicians had also held the Scottish local government elections on the same day. These used a new voting system to Scotland, the single transferable vote (STV), which requires ranked choice: 1, 2, 3,...etc.

The media were quick to point out how this must have added to the confusion.

The media failed to mention how well this totally new system went with the Scottish people, spoiling slightly less than 2% of the ballot papers, though it was introduced in the most difficult of circumstances (maybe intentionally by those politicians who didn't want it to be seen to work).

Since then, there has been a move by some politicians both in the Scottish and British parliaments to have STV for all Scottish elections.

One can almost see the place-holders chaining themselves to their safe seats, against such an eventuality.

[To top](#)

Why do I get two votes? (Page 22.)

"The first vote on the ballot allows you to choose a party. This vote determines the total share of seats each party gets in the legislature. The second vote allows you to choose an individual member to represent your local district. Together the two votes give you strong local representation and produce fairer election results."

Comment: Fiction?

Delusion: The strong local representation is the strong hold politicians have on their safe seats. The CA deemed this a source of MMP "legitimacy" (p. 15). The chains that bind voters to a monopoly candidate are undoubtedly strong links. By repeating often enough to voters that they have strong local links to their representatives, some of them, the represented at least, may have come to believe it as a virtue.

Tho, the merely oppressive strength of monopoly is not generally considered a blessing.

The more recent delusion is that counting votes for parties produces a fairer result. It undoubtedly shares out the seats between the parties. And again thru constant repetition, this proportional partisanship is now believed fair. Called by the traditional term proportional representation, this disguises its abolition of representative democracy.

The listed parties "trade-off" their respective policies in back-room coalition deals. It is not surprising politicians should regard electoral systems also as having trade-offs. As their politics divides the country over competing lobbies for favors, an electoral system that empowers the people to the extent they agree, as well as disagree, is beyond their conception.

In short, why do you get two votes?

Two X-votes, being only one-preference votes, both enforce strategic voting (to avoid one preference vote for ranked order of choice, in a proportional count).

Two wrongs dont make a right.

About accountability. (page 24.)

"Like local members, list members are accountable to the voters. They are elected through the party vote. If voters are unhappy with a party's performance or its list members, they can withdraw their support for that party in the next election."

Comment: This is the doctrine of corporate accountability not individual accountability. Here the Ontario Citizens Assembly report-writers have taken it upon themselves to recognise that infamous victory for inequality before the law, namely corporate law, in politics as well as business: one law for parties, another for everyone else. Unless recognised for the fiction it is, this statement is grievously misleading, because it pretends there is no difference in principle between voting for individuals and voting for parties.

Do lists give parties too much power?

"In the current system, parties nominate their local candidates. In the new system, they will also nominate candidates to their party lists. It is the voters who will decide, through their two votes, which local candidates are elected and how many candidates are elected from each party's list. The requirements for publishing party lists will allow voters to know who is on a list and in what order, and whether a list was created in a fair and transparent way, before they vote."

Comment: This statement has the politicians bland way of not answering the question. But the answer is evidently: yes. The voters

are graciously allowed to know who will be on the lists to represent the parties rather than themselves, and whether the parties played fair with themselves, tho not with the electorate.

The report thinks closed lists make for the Select Committee requirement of "Effective parties" but it only leaves the voters ineffective. Excluding the public from representation will not engage people with party politics.

[To top](#)

"Fairness of representation" (p. 11) is left to parties to produce balanced lists of minorities. There is nothing to stop these being stooge candidates, whatever group they may come from. That comes of abolishing representative democracy for list votes.

Of "Stable and effective governments" (p. 13) the CA is "reassured by the experiences of other countries."

Comment: God's in his heaven and all's right with the world: is hardly an argument.

For "Effective parliament" New Zealand is cited. But their Canadian Commissioners submission said the tone hadnt changed with MMP. A Canadian, on a discussion forum, got a complaint, because he kept on about family letters from NZ saying they hate the system and it doesnt work.

"Stronger voter participation."

"The Assembly found that no electoral system by itself can have an appreciable impact on voter turnout."

Comment: It might have been more honest simply to admit that MMP does not by itself improve voter turn-out. It must be false that turn-out is not affected by how effective voters perceive the system to be.

Indeed this is a common complaint against unelective elections or safe seat systems.

MMP has party proportionality but it is a doubly safe seat system.

Political scientists, who exhort electors to their civic responsibilities, would do better to study civically responsible electoral system, and mend their own civic responsibilities.

I stand corrected but I seem to remember these siren voices early on in the Ontario CA schedule.

The report endorses MMP dual candidacy. The same candidate would be allowed to run on both ballots, allegedly because others than the first past the post "will have strong support from voters."

The illogic of this is that MMP, introduced to make representation more proportional than First Past The Post, ends up by making it less representative than FPTP in so far as MMP "elects" representatives who are not even First Past The Post.

That is a greater anomaly than the report apology that some candidates second past the post get more votes than some candidates first past the post. And that is no indication of the two candidates relative popularity, if put to a genuine electoral test in multi-member constituencies offering a preference vote between more than one member of each party.

The back-ground report (Democracy At Work p. 153) states that in 2002 German elections, over 90% of list members also ran locally. In New Zealand, the figure was 84%. The report claimed this as beneficial local constituency experience for candidates.

The CA briefings, for all their political softness, pointed out that MMP made it harder to "throw the rascals out." The Richard report found it

unacceptable that MMP virtually denied voters the right to reject candidates they did not want.

Parties may win more local seats than share of votes entitles them to. (Page 25.)

The Ontario CA had a change of heart by allowing this "over-hang" of seats from party-proportionality. They decided not to subject the legislature to changing numbers of seats, if only minimal changes. Removing this complication was recommended by the academic, Gregory Morrow, supporting MMP. He also challenged the CA balance of 90 to 39 seats. He pleaded with them to increase the 30% party proportional adjustment to 33%, with 45 list seats. The CA proposal for MMP is the least proportional mixed system in use, apart from a stray German province (DAW p. 149).

Mr Morrow also pleaded for Open Lists, because Ontarians, at consultation meetings across the province, said they did not want Closed Lists.

You see this is the problem with these consultation exercises. People know what they don't want but they don't know how to get what they do want. This was the job of the Citizens Assembly.

The assembly opted for the Hare formula of proportionality, because they said it is the simplest.

Comment: Using the Hare formula to elect a single member would oblige a candidate to win all the votes to be elected. The Hare formula means nobody ever would be elected in single member constituencies. Only dictators claim they have practically total support. Therefore, Hare quota applied to multi-member party lists, is the highest quota, the highest hurdle for a party to overcome, even to gain a share, in a multi-member constituency, of a single seat.

This is a further way that Ontario CA limited sharing the spoils with small parties.

Better not have a party spoils system, at all.

The Ontario CA recommended a 3% threshold of the votes for a party to receive a List seat. The small parties are the crying baby that gets picked up. Hence, the assemblys only understanding was that small parties are under-represented.

But a low threshold seems not particularly helpful when the compensation to small parties in list seats is lower than in other countries. Even within the assemblys own narrow evaluation of electoral problems, this contradiction, between relatively few list seats available, for relatively more parties reaching a low threshold, does not seem a thoughtful response.

The assemblys self-imposed remit to proportional partisanship has thrown up the usual range of decisions or dilemmas, the above discussion has indicated are unjustifiable.

There are such things as electoral standards. The official line, that all electoral rules have trade-offs, deflected the assembly into choosing indefensible rules. Authority and academe mis-led the assembly into believing that reason wouldnt be offended, whatever their choices of rules. Hence, their auto-pilot report.

Why was it a premature report?

[To top](#)

The Ontario Citizens Assembly report was premature, because the Assembly Citizens views were still in flux when the decisive votes were taken.

I've already mentioned that about 800 of the independent submissions didn't appear till the month before the first vote for first choice of voting system to model. In fact the Ontario assembly background report, *Democracy At Work*, reveals that 600 submissions didn't appear till the last fortnight of January. Yet the crucial first vote was taken in the first new year meeting, on 18 February.

There was scarcely time to read, much less assimilate, let alone compare notes and discuss, the independent evidence. Whereas the official briefing was over six week-ends at fortnightly intervals, followed by the Christmas holidays to further take it in. The assembly members were primed in the official line or "education" and then jumped into a decision before alternative view-points had any chance to take effect.

On 18 February 2007, ten times the assembly members preferred to model MMP (78%) to STV (getting only 8 votes). In fact the vote was really greater than ten to one, because the remaining votes mostly went to similar, or partly similar, systems to MMP. That is the Parallel system and the List system.

On 1 April 2007, the final vote was taken to decide between MMP (75 votes) and STV (25 votes).

Anyone who has been in a small minority knows how hard it is to move a mass opinion your way. There were only two weekends a month that the Assembly met. These sessions were time-tabled, like a school, which must have further limited the opportunities for airing this particular controversy.

In a short period with few meetings, STV gained from less than one in ten supporters to one in four supporters. This brought it close to that important psychological tipping point, when one can no longer merely go with the crowd. In fact, the shift of support to STV in the Ontario Citizens Assembly followed a similar time-scale to that in the British Columbia Citizens Assembly.

The Ontario government should not have rushed the CA exercise. Now we will never know what the Ontario Citizens Assembly would have decided had they also had almost a year to follow thru, instead of seven months from september to end of march.

Now we cannot say what the definitive decision of the Ontario CA would have been over a year, such as is typically taken by a government commission (some much longer). We can only say that the government prevented it from reaching a settled opinion, that was afforded British Columbia.

In the (first) British Columbia referendum on the Citizens Assembly recommendation, STV was decisively endorsed on two counts, province-wide and by district. The Press routinely said it was "defeated" because just one, of the two arbitrary thresholds required, was not met. Yet the other threshold was far exceeded. A second referendum is scheduled.

Mr Urquhart of The Toronto Star coupled STV with such slights as "absurd," "loopy" or "barmy," every time he mentioned it. Press prejudice is why someone needs to say that in reality, the Ontario Citizens Assembly was a rushed business, before its official house-view collapsed on its sand foundations. Its sand foundations were most obviously the governments and their hired academics "trade-offs" apology for world anarchy of electoral methods.

It is also noticable that the Ontario government intends to fully fund the explaining or "educating" of the province to its Citizens Assembly recommendation, unlike the gesture, now admitted to be token, of the British Columbia government to promote awareness of its Citizens Assembly recommendation.

[To top](#)

From the start, the Ontario government gave its views of differing voting systems, as if it knew already what they were about. The assembly followed.

As discussed on the page about due process, the politicians told the Assembly that every system had its advantages and disadvantages or trade-offs. The very idea of right and wrong was disappeared. Political scientists, brought in from all over the world, didnt bite the political hand that fed them, as they were reported by the secretariat to endorse this view, that the Assembly had a consumer choice of voting system, like choosing a make of car or a suit to peculiarly fit Ontarians, rather than anybody else.

Hence, the Assembly was given one message by political authority reinforced by academic authority. These two authorities then urged the authority of the Ontario electorate upon them. They were told their efforts were otherwise "meaningless." Again no question of right or wrong but of the electoral fashion abroad in the province. Right and wrong do not depend on authority, nor on how fashionable a view is.

The Citizens Assembly report claimed to seek the best choice for the people of Ontario. They meant that they had chosen the system that best fit the provinces wishes. (They hadn't: the province didn't want

to be left with strategic voting or closed lists.) The report didn't mean some system that was necessarily better for Ontario or anywhere else. They meant a subjective decision. But voting method objectively depends on a logic of choice.

A derisory example was how the Ontario CA could vote for the people of Ontario not to have preferential voting but they couldn't do it, without using a preferential ballot. (Democracy At Work, pages 105, 110, 118. Hence referred to as DAW.) The academic support staff knew that multiple choices require a preference vote, to avoid split voting producing an obviously faulty result, which would have mocked their professional competence.

Openly admitting the truth of the principle behind a necessary practise would have put their neutrality in conflict with the status quo. The Citizens Assembly was not really initiated into the mysteries of the occult science of elections. On graduation, they were called Alumni but most may have had their counsels darkened.

Historically, some parties clamored to be better off with proportional counting but ignored the equally necessary condition of preference voting, as only of advantage to the voters. Like most naive folk, the Ontario CA have been the undiscerning mirror of that power politics.

The Assembly Citizens were set up to "design" a required voting system for Ontario. (DAW p. 102) They were put in a position of infantile self-centredness. It's like treating physicists as designers of the universe, who could make up their own laws without reference to realities. A message of this critique is that politicians and academics have to recognise standards of genuine democracy.

Ignoring all paradoxes, the summary report (1B2V) appeals on subjective grounds, such as that certain people did not want sweeping changes. No doubt they didn't. But I don't remember any

such consistent sentiment in the submissions. And whether the change be sweeping or dusting is irrelevant to whether it is right. The truth has to be respected on its own terms, not on ones conservatism or radicalism of temperament. It's not a matter of Right or Left, it's a matter of right or wrong.

[To top](#)

The report also appealed to the authority of the so-called principles of the three main parties select committee report. The fact is that anybody could, and anybody did, argue every which way, on the basis of these catch-phrases. They had no scientific merit. They did nothing to further anyones understanding of the issues involved. It was a conditioning exercise by politicians.

Indeed, the report might have been written by politicians for its blandness. It was a successful training exercise in making citizens think like politicians, which is to say, not to think at all, but to follow the official line.

An ancient Chinese proverb says that the beginning of wisdom is to call things by their proper names. The Ontario government "democratic renewal" turned out to be an exercise in oligarchic renewal, based on the premis that everything is alright with the world anarchy of electoral systems: it's just a matter of the locals subjective choice.

The back-ground report says (DAW p. 153) that the principle of the Ontario CA recommendation, the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system, is that the share of seats a party wins is roughly proportional to its share of the party vote.

In other words, MMP is a party-based system not a voter-based system. That is the difference of deference to the party few, from preference for the representatives of the many.

The back-ground report (DAW p. 150) says that a "closed list is used in almost every MMP jurisdiction." It adds: "the research shows a majority of voters prefer to vote for a party and that the candidate-option often has limited effect on who is elected."

This is how the report justifies the hovel of a democracy it offers the people of Ontario:

Firstly, nearly everyone else lives in a hovel, so who are you to think you are any better?

Secondly, most people only vote for a party, so just give them a party vote - never mind that the party vote is nothing but a party vote, so they couldn't prefer to vote otherwise, even if they wanted to.

This is circular evidence masquerading as "research." It breaks the first rule of investigation: presumption is not proof.

Thirdly, and following from secondly, open lists don't work, so you might as well put up with closed lists.

It's rather like saying: we cannot stop the rain coming in, so you cannot have a roof. It's an example of fallacious reasoning. The condition is true: open lists don't work (because they remain essentially party votes). But the implicit premise, that all (proportionally counted) votes must be party list votes, is false. That is why the conclusion is false, since it doesn't follow that if open lists don't work, you have to put up with closed lists.

Well, if the report cannot do democratic method, others can.

The report falls back on happy side-effects of the variety: it may rain in unimpeded, but think of this as indoor showers.

Of the closed list, we hear: "This provides a measure of predictability for voters." (DAW p. 150) So, of course, do any top down clique that cannot be popularly dislodged. That merely apologises for dictatorship or place-holding.

We are also told (DAW p. 109) a closed list is "simpler and more transparent than an open list." It's true that open lists are an ineffective muddle and that at least with a closed list you know who's boss, indeed the whole party pecking order. But democratic election goes beyond feeling secure from knowing who is in authority, or uncritical leader-worship.

The report goes on that closed lists are more likely to secure representation of women and other under-represented groups. This is true of any multi-member system. It is an argument against single member constituencies. Not an argument for closed lists, as such.

Conversely, (DAW p. 108) "The members clearly valued local representation and many were ready to sacrifice some proportionality, if necessary, to maintain it."

This dilemma fails to distinguish the issue of local levels of government from more or less proportional elections. It fails to distinguish local constituencies from single member constituencies. And if, as previously claimed, people mainly vote for a party, why must they have only one representative per constituency?

The official briefing on-line did not examine, or did little, if anything, to disturb conventional wisdoms such as that a monopoly representation is a strong link or that proportional representation is essentially proportional partisanship.

Instead, it was drummed into the assembly citizens from the start, that all voting systems have their advantages and disadvantages and there are trade-offs to be made between them. As a consequence of such an "educated" attitude, it was logical of members to resort to a mixed system.

The trade-off scenario suggests why the Ontario CA opted for a less mixed system than other MMP systems.

Further explanation may be offered by the size of Ontario legislature having been reduced to well below the average for Canada's provinces. It must have seemed providential to assembly members that all they had to do was restore the number of MPPs with party lists. They were thus taking advantage of a situation unique to Ontario. And this could seem right to them, because they had been told to do just that: come up with a system best suited or tailored to Ontario.

This legislature short-fall offered the assembly a spuriously "Ontarian" way out they had been instructed to find, without bothering their heads beyond this superficial solution. Revealingly, the chairman George Thompson told the assembly that, just once, he was stepping out of his passive role, to advise them not to get hung up on the issue of legislature size in choosing an electoral system.

Final remarks.

[To top](#)

Firstly, a few paragraphs in my own defense. Amongst many other things, my Ontario CA submission did warn against the nonsense of the government and academic apology for the world anarchy of voting methods. I insisted very fully there are democratic standards, in accord with scientific method, which must be met.

I warned Ontario that the anarchic folly had already been followed in my own country.

In Britain we have half a dozen undemocratic voting methods where one democratic method would do.

The only approach to sanity is the successful introduction of STV for Scottish local elections in may 2007.

I also warned against choosing a system, to please everyone, that would please no-one. This was the fate of the Jenkins report, in the UK. I cannot say that the Ontario CA have tried to please enough. They failed to deal with the submission complaints against strategic voting. They failed to deal with the consultation meetings opposition to closed lists.

The assembly had not only the superficiality of their own knowledge but that of the public to contend with. MMP is largely the propaganda success of smaller party control freaks, in the political profession, who are too small-spirited to realise that in making stooges of the voters, they are systematically making stooges of themselves to two constituency-entrenched parties.

Doubts have already been expressed about whether the Ontario CA report will be well received by the public.

Nobody has asked me and I do not know how Ontarians will disentangle themselves from the mess of their exercise in direct democracy, that was directed too much, and cut short directly independent evidence was in.

The logistics of the Ontario Citizens Assembly, as described in the report, Democracy At Work, remind me of H G Wells short story, "The Pearl of Love."

After all this fanfare about democratic renewal, after every conceivable contingency taken into account and provided for, the original purpose was forgotten.

The point, of all of this preparation, was supposed to be that the Citizens Assembly would have every opportunity to make an

informed choice, between voting systems, of whose wisdom we could benefit by.

When it came to their making that choice, not even the back-ground document gives any clue as to the key debates. It is rather as if you built a forum, say like the Canadian federal parliament, fully equipped with modern communications, and then decided to hold crucial meetings informally on the lawn.

We don't know from the reports, what members' views were when they voted first to model MMP. That was on February 18, when the schedule bounced them into their first crucial decision, as soon as the bulk of the submissions had come in, and sooner than any independent evidence could take effect among a hundred people from all over the province.

The report (on p. 125) gives no account of the first of April debate between MMP and STV. The chairman no doubt held a fair debate, asking different points of view in turn. But we are not told what they said. No doubt the information is somewhere but it should be in the reports. Striking is the casualness towards the supposed assembly objective when arrived at. A mountain of preparation scheduled a mole-hill of deliberation.

Likewise for the debate between the old Simple Majority system and MMP. There may have been only eight members who voted for it. But judging from the government's reluctance to part with a system around since 1792, the report might have actually reported someone's prepared arguments to keep it, and almost everyone else's reasons for not doing so.

As that former Canadian resident Rudyard Kipling said, of triumph and disaster: treat those two imposters just the same. It looks to me as tho the British Columbia and Ontario Citizens Assemblies were respectively triumph and disaster.

I suspect that if the Ontario assembly had the time of the BC assembly, they would have followed the same learning curve, as they were already doing, up till the 1 April decisive vote, in the much shorter and much more controled Ontario procedure.

I dont want to repeat the qualifications to this assessment on my previous chapter about due process for future assemblies. The point of this chapter is to review the Ontario Citizens Assembly reports, showing that the lead by authority has not resulted in an authoritative report.

*7 June 2007;
slight addition, 10 june 2007.*

Post-script, april 2015.

Ireland has had a century of practical experience in STV. So, it was cheering that their 2012 Constitutional Convention of 100 members voted 79% against replacing STV with MMP.

86% supported an increase in the constitutional minimum size of constituencies from 3 to 5 members.

67% supported change from alfabetic ordering of candidates names on ballot papers (to remove a statistical bias of choice for candidates whose names begin with early letters of the alfabet).

(PRSA Quota Notes.)

[To top](#)

Referendums.

Party leaders sabotaged the BC Citizens Assembly and referendum experiment.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Links to sections:

BC parties:

Liberals;

[Greens](#);

[New Democrats](#).

["STV is dead."](#) (Long live STV.)

[Letters](#) to British Columbians:

"What the heck" is BC-STV? (Reply to a UBC professor.)

BC did not use STV in 1952. (Correction of an academic article.)

The No-STV president doubts [Irish elections](#).

Bill Tieleman claims STV under-represents [women](#).

David Schreck scepticism.

The No campaign claim [STV is complicated](#) and confusing and wont do.

The National Post article against STV.

[No-STV post-referendum](#) 2009 remarks.

BC parties.

Liberals.

The British Columbia Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform was set-up on a promise of the Liberal leader, Gordon Campbell, after the New Democratic Party (NDP) won an election with more seats for fewer votes.

He kept his promise, which is more than most politicians have, in similar circumstances. Unfortunately, the First Past The Post system, like some goddess threatened by loss of worshippers, so switched her favors to the Liberals that the ensuing election obliterated the NDP but for two seats in the provincial legislature.

And when the Citizens Assembly, one woman and one man volunteer chosen at random from each district, was safely convened, they found that their recommendation would have to pass a double hurdle in the forthcoming referendum. 60% of the voters would have to say: Yes. And 60% of the districts would have to show a majority support.

FPTP had won back Liberal party allegiance with a vengeance. And short of insurgent levels of support for reform, the politicians, like an old aristocracy, would veto it. I have read that the double threshold was "eagerly" endorsed by the opposition leadership also.

This was sabotage on a grand scale. French Quebec or indeed any other province could leave the Canadian Federation on winning over 50% of the votes. And try and stop them! Any other issue might pass on a democratic majority but the issue of democratic voting method: this was to be decided by undemocratic means to keep elections undemocratic. Votes were weighted for FPTP support at 40%, by

half as much again, so that they count as much as reform votes up to 60%.

This set an ugly precedent, taken-up by two other Canadian provinces, Prince Edward Island and Ontario, which both held electoral reform referendums with the double 60% threshold. So, the scales of justice weigh heavily against Gordon Campbell and his turn-coat party. BC politicians irresponsibly failed to consider the ill consequences for their country of their unprincipled evasion of their obligations.

It must also be said that Gordon Campbell did conduct the Citizens Assembly in the spirit in which it was intended. He, or any other big-wigs, didnt so much as show their face in the place until the members work was all over. And then he didnt try to personly sway public opinion as to the decision. And the assembly was given plenty of time to deliberate.

This was in complete contrast to the Ontario Citizens Assembly. Its chairman has since said that they didnt have enough time to do their work properly.

It has been contended that the BC CA was told what to say by resident academics supportive of STV. The learning curve of the assembly doesnt support this claim. It followed a similar pattern to the Ontario assembly, until the latter was cut short, while the balance of opinion, between the Mixed Member Proportional system, and the Single Transferable Vote was still changing.

When Gordon Campbells political soul is weighed in the scales of justice, we can be sure that they will swing wildly and it is highly doubtful that they will settle in his favor.

Greens.

[To top](#)

It is certain on which side the balance will rest with respect to the then BC Green Party leader Adriane Carr. Tho, some indulgence might be allowed her for enlivening politics like a Joan Collins prima donna in Dynasty, with an emphasis on the nasty.

The whole point of the Citizens Assembly was that ordinary citizens should decide the nature of the voting system, which is supposed to be the citizens effective input into the constitutional procedure. The parties were to keep out of it. And the two main parties, Liberals and NDP, did not try to impose their views on the assembly. But the Greens did.

Previously, they tried to "hi-jack" the reform movement by flying a kite for an MMP referendum, pre-empting what system was to be adopted.

During the assembly deliberation, they flooded the submissions with a thousand or more forms, some of them worded slightly differently, to make it look as if they came from independent sources, in favor of MMP and against STV. Ever since, the impudent legend has been bruited about that this was the wish of the people.

The whole point of BC CA, as a deliberative assembly was to deliberate, not endorse the organised prejudice of some self-interested minority masquerading as a majority.

When the CA decided in favor of STV against MMP, contrary to the insistence of her supporters, Adriane Carr is said to have burst into tears. Doing her Joan Collins prima donna act, she vowed to use the Green party to defeat STV for FPTP in the 2005 referendum.

Even if the leader only neutralised her party, this likely made enough difference to prevent STV achieving the impossible, as it won nearly 58% of the votes, just shy of the required 60%.

The New Zealand Greens were foremost in promoting Meek STV. Scottish Greens support STV for all official elections.

English Greens still formally favor MMP (alias AMS) whose two X-votes are both subject to split voting.

The Alliance for Green Socialism (ASG) sliced a small but significant margin of votes off the Greens, in British Euro-elections. This union-funded party may be the spoiler of the Greens getting a regional party list seat or so.

Transferable voting across party lines would prevent vote splits between rival Green parties and safe-guard the Greens representation.

The UK Greens supported the Alternative Vote referendum, and the British National Party did not, precisely because the former has cross-party environmental sympathisers to extend voting preferences to the Greens, while the latter is isolated from sympathy of most of the voters for other parties.

Partly as a result of BC Greens cutting their nose to spite their face, the STV referendum, the biggest vote in BC history, was defined as a "defeat," such is the power of the dishonest use of words to affect peoples thoughts, like mind-altering drugs.

This STV "defeat" was such, that, by the same standards, no other legislation would ever have been passed. You might as well have never had a provincial assembly.

STV did win majorities, in all but two of the districts, where it lost only by a whisker, coming close to 100% majority support, compared to the required 60%, of districts.

New Democrats.

[To top](#)

Consequently, Gordon Campbell allowed another referendum in 2009. There was a decisive difference, however. In 2005, the parties were kept out, having a conflict of interest in the decision. Only truthful information was allowed to be imparted on the two contending voting methods, FPTP and STV.

In 2009, the funding was put out to tender. Half a million dollars each went to a Yes to STV campaign and a No to STV campaign. The latter had for President and Treasurer, two high-ups from the New Democratic Party (NDP), Bill Tieleman and David Schreck. An impartial campaign was replaced by a partial campaign.

Instead of imparting information, the Yes campaign was spending its efforts in combating an anti-STV show trial prosecuted in the manner of the jobbing lawyer or partisan legislator. (My BC letters, in the section below, are mainly corrections of their misinformation.)

The No-STV president, Bill Tieleman, said they spent most of their funds on mass advertising. They didnt have an organisation on the ground. He was amazed by the 5000 canvassers for the STV campaign. (The Yes campaign said 6000.)

The first No and Yes to STV tv broadcasts lasted 30 seconds: time is money. The commercials cost a fortune to tell everyone as little as possible.

The No STV advert repeated that STV is "complicated," and said the votes were split-up into fractions and you wouldnt know where your votes went. They said the multi-member constituencies would be too big.

The Yes to STV advert repeated the comment: That's not fair! of the two BC elections, which saw the two main parties alternately under-represented and over-represented.

The July 2009 Fair Votes newsletter cited a post-referendum opinion poll showing that the public believed FPTP is not fair but STV is too complicated.

Apparently, people simply believed both adverts of the two campaigns.

This is not good enough.

Firstly, it should be ascertained whether the public is interested enough in a referendum, on any given issue, to follow it intelligently. Secondly, the issue should be given a series of public broadcasts to inform on the issue, and substantial debates to decide which contending views should be supported.

Instead, there was an ignorant farce of 30 second seminars which are supposed to decide an issue for a generation.

Judging by an online remark, shortly before 12 May, by Chrystal Ocean, she found tiresome how the mass media was full of prejudice against the reform. They say nothing, until they have to, and then all their established opinions come tumbling out, with no-one to disabuse them.

After the referendum, an STV canvasser recalled a greeting sneer that appeared on people's faces, as much to say: Oh you're the people pushing that stupid system.

Adriane Carr accepted a vice-presidency of the Greens, being effectively kicked up-stairs before the 2009 referendum, when the BC Greens got a supportive new leader. By now, tho, the NDP had

broken the conflict-of-interest barrier, and their leader Carole James was voicing her opposition to STV. She wanted a party voting system, and held out the promise that voting against STV didn't mean that there would not be PR.

The siren voice of Carole James (who actually looks as glamorous as Joan Collins) was the third party leader who sabotaged the BC Citizens Assembly decision, which was for the voter-centered system of STV/PR, rather than the party-centered system of MMP, that the likes of Carr and James would control.

The No-to-STV campaign won decisively by over 61% of the 2009 referendum vote. STV got less than 39%. The No campaign, passing the 60% threshold that scuppered STV in 2005, was the final inglorious to the heroic campaign of electoral reformers for an almost unknown electoral reform, that its opponents had successfully belittled.

The provincial assembly election was held on the same day. Despite vigorous attempts to improve the falling turn-out, it fell to a new low of about half the electorate.

Afterwards, someone commented: "British Columbia is ruled by fear and ignorance."

"STV is dead." (Long live STV.)

[To top](#)

The No-to-STV president's victory announcement was: "STV is dead."

As someone rejoined on his blog: Then why are you still arguing against it?

Bill Tieleman knows better. Shortly after the referendum, he was approaching a Green web site (greenpolitics_ca) with its Adriane Carr badge, apparently putting out feelers on the possibility of the NDP and Greens joining over the MMP system. He was trying to delegitimise the Citizens Assembly decision for STV against the Carr Greens choice of MMP.

Both the anti-STV supporters of the Greens and NDP have succeeded in doing down its democracy. But their victory has been hollow. The introduction of MMP would seal the demise of STV representative democracy, while possibly advancing their partisan interest, should it turn out, in future, that the NDP cannot win without a Green coalition.

This potential left alliance, in turn, may have decisively turned away the BC Liberal voters from even non-partisan STV-PR in the 2009 referendum.

The point about STV is that it transcends party lines for freely ordered individual candidates of the same or different parties. Its individual liberty of choice allows any desired degree or kind of national unity. STV is representative democracy that alone offers a way out from party divisions and dog-fights.

STV will not be forgotten because of the second BC referendum. Its principle is as old as the Gospel incident of the loaves and fishes: transfer of surplus food from those who don't need it to those who do. The Churches of England and Scotland both use STV.

One sarcastic online caption asked: What have Tasmania, Malta and Ireland in common?

I answered: The same thing, in Britain, that the Computer Society, the Statistical Society and the London Mathematical Society have in

common. Indeed that the National Health Service, the National Union of Teachers and the National Union of Students have in common, or any number of professional bodies in English Speaking countries. Wikipedia gives some other examples.

Some of the following I also said at the time: It is not leadership to incite the herd instinct and stampede against anything unusual, regardless of real merit. The No campaign did not deserve their success, which was only in making fools of their country, like "The village that voted that the earth is flat." (Rudyard Kipling.)

There is a limited truth in the earth being flat, just as there is a limited truth in the single majority system. (One limits oneself accordingly.) It is the most limited case of STV multi-majority system (as explained below).

Letters to British Columbians.

[To top](#)

This selection was written during the second BC-STV referendum campaign of 2009. They were mostly on local on-line news-paper articles. Most of them saw little comment. I doubt all of them were read by a room full of people. But it was all I could do. Had I been there, I would have joined the 6000 STV campaigners personally meeting local people.

"What the heck" is BC-STV? (Reply to a UBC professor.)

Re the English prof. (at University of British Columbia) who wanted to know "what the heck" is the BC-STV option, British Columbians

may vote for, in the 12 May referendum 2009.

STV, single transferable vote finishes the job that First Past The Post began. FPTP only takes a round of votes to elect the candidate who has more votes than any other single candidate. The more candidates, there are, the more split the votes, and the less votes and smaller minorities it takes for one candidate to be "elected."

The time is long over-due for the job to be done properly. To respect democratic majority, a candidate should win at least half the votes in a single member constituency. This can be done by excluding the candidates with least votes, until some candidate gets over half the votes. The excluded candidates votes are re-distributed to their voters second preferences. This is Instant Run-off Voting, also called the Alternative Vote, with a ranked choice 1, 2, 3,.. etc.

There are two outstanding problems with IRV, that STV over-comes. Firstly, IRV still allows up to half the voters to go unrepresented in any constituency. BC-STV proposes multi-member constituencies, averaging about 4 or 5 seats. The range is from 2 to 7 seats, depending on how sparsely or densely populated the constituency.

There would only be one 2-member and one 7-member constituency in British Columbia.

A 2-member constituency elects two candidates, each on reaching one third of the votes each, thus guaranteeing a proportional representation of two-thirds the voters. (By the same reasoning a 3-member constituency would give a PR of three-quarters its constituency voters. And so on.) So, STV gives more equal or proportional representation with far less wasted votes than FPTP or IRV.

The second problem STV overcomes is strategic voting, with single X-vote for the least disliked front-runner FPTP. IRV does not so

much waste votes but it still wastes a high proportion of first preferences, as only one candidate can win in a single-member constituency.

With STV in the 2007 Scottish local elections, nearly three-quarters of first preferences went to electing the representatives.

The vote being transferable owes to the transfer of votes from most preferred candidates giving up more than the elective proportion of votes they need, to second preferences. This is where the famous fractioning of the vote comes in. If your first preference is elected with more votes than she needs, then all of your one vote is not needed to elect her, and a fraction of it, determined by the size of her surplus, is transferred to your second preference.

Some of the least preferred candidates may have to be excluded, so their second preferences can go to candidates still in contention.

Some claim that party proportional systems using an X-vote for a list of candidates (abolishing representative democracy in the process), are more proportional than STV. This is actually not the case. You can add or subtract parties at will, just as you can individual candidates, and it will split the party vote different ways giving different proportions of support for them. The point is that a preference vote is just as essential as a proportional count.

In short, STV is essential for representative democracy. The BC Citizens Assembly report on electoral reform knows what it's talking about and is put in an accessible style by the people for the people.

BC did not use STV in 1952. (Correction of an academic article.)

This article (by an academic) is like saying that countries using party list systems use "an adapted" first past the post system, because

both systems employ an X-vote. It is just as misleading to say the BC elections of 1952 and 1953 used "an adapted STV system" just because both systems use a preference vote.

The 1952 BC election was highly disproportionate. Enid Lakeman in her standard work, *How Democracies Vote*, described the multi-member system count used as effectively the same "as if the same people voted three times in three single-member constituencies." This means that the largest faction, not necessarily an over-all majority, say forty per cent of the voters could decide all three seats.

BC-STV, recommended by the Citizens Assembly for the 12 May 2009 referendum, uses a proportional count of a preference vote. In a three-member constituency, forty per cent of the voters could only take one seat out-right. And a minimum of three-quarters of the voters would be represented, instead of say 40%.

On average BC-STV constituencies will have more seats per constituency and thus highly equal or proportional representation.

BC-STV has the essential combined reform of both the vote and the count: preference voting to end the need for strategic voting with a single preference X-vote, and proportional counting to end the wasted votes on a first past the post count.

Consequently, the dubious history of provincial politics outlined by the academic is totally irrelevant as a lesson in STV usage. BC needs STV to end strategic voting (i.e. tactical voting) and wasted voting.

The No-STV president doubts Irish elections.

[To top](#)

Bill Tieleman is using some good evidence about Irish party control, which we can learn from. It is a pleasure to see some real arguments, for once, but the balance of evidence from Ireland is decisive in favor of STV.

When STV was first introduced in 1922 to Ireland, the two main parties banded together to nullify the result by adopting a panel of candidates. They also issued a joint manifesto against any other candidates.

With First Past The Post, this would have rendered the rest of the candidates as wasted votes. But with STV in multi-member constituencies, the Irish voters were able to prefer individual pro or anti-treaty candidates so that they were proportionally represented decisively on the issue of the Irish treaty on Independence, and the people's decision was upheld.

From the start, Ireland has had independent MPs with STV, though almost unknown with FPTP. The major party came to resent its lack of false majorities of seats with FPTP, enjoyed by the two main British parties. Fortunately, this eventuality had been foreseen and STV-PR fairness got it safeguarded by referendum.

The Irish people twice supported STV and even the supporters of the larger party in the mainly rural western Ireland did not support a supplementary question whether they wanted smaller single member constituencies.

The biggest Irish party has whittled down the seats per constituency and reduced proportionality to inflate their representation. But BC-STV would be significantly more proportional than STV in Ireland now.

The continued Irish popularity of STV prevents further party initiatives getting beyond the select committee stage. They can't win another referendum. STV opponents point out that BC is huge

compared to Ireland. Ireland is huge compared to ancient Athens but democracy does not have to give way to oligarchy and dictatorship on any scale of representation. It is the accuracy of the measure of representation that is decisive and this is what STV gives far better than any other system.

That is as well as the efficiency of modern communications that even makes a federation like Canada possible. And there are possible levels of government for any degree of locality you want. The argument is bogus that locality is more important than election so that you have to reduce choice to a monopolistic constituency.

The preliminary Plant report of the British Labour party rejected STV precisely on the basis of figures of the turn-over of Irish MPs of the same party replacing each other.

I suspect this is what is meant by Bill Tieleman quoting nastiness of Irish politics. It is an expression of disapproval of intra-party as well as extra-party competition. The party high command want to control who of their candidates gets elected. It is certainly why the Plant report recommended a selection of any other prominent voting method but STV.

The rest is history. As I like to repeat: Britain has half a dozen undemocratic voting methods where STV would do. (The 2007 Scottish local STV elections escaped Londons censorious jurisdiction.)

Typical STV candidates must reach beyond votes of party supporters and that makes STV more unitive than the two-party system or the dogmatically partisan list systems, including MMP.

Bill Tieleman claims STV under-represents women.

[To top](#)

The problem with First Past The Post elections is that leaders come to deceive themselves that their majorities of seats reflect their popular support. Proportional representation is needed to banish this absent-mindedness and oblige politicians to work together on how to reach agreement with more properly thought-out legislation.

Of more immediate concern is the negative advertising that has already begun to show itself by the No STV campaign. Of their half dozen claims tested for effect on the voters, one of them is actually true: politicians would have less power. Or rather it would be true if you added: to misrepresent the voters.

The other claims include: STV is only used in two small countries and women would be less likely to get elected. These claims refer to STV in two devoutly Roman Catholic countries, Malta and Eire, where women were recently reminded by their church to stay out of politics.

Bill Tieleman of No STV admitted that campaigners were not "choir boys." Indeed, when Bill shoulders his way thru the pearly gates, he will be crooked by St Peter to know why he made out STV rather than his holy church was responsible for fewer women MPs in Eire and Malta.

St Peter will then go on to reprove Bill that the angels in Britains National Health Service were only proportionly represented when STV replaced FPTP. FPTP elections left the General Medical Council dominated by white male GPs. STV proportionly represented women, immigrants and specialists. (Electoral Reform Society, 1979 Audit.) New Zealand Health Boards are also now elected by STV. As will be Scotland Health Boards.

[P.S. april 2015:

Hey, Bill!

In 2013, those pious Maltese elected 10 women to their 65 seats.

How dare they! after Father Church told them all to keep out.

93% turn-out with STV (highest in Europe), instead of a half with simple plurality, in BC province elections, 2009. This was despite a vigorous turn-out the vote campaign, having no apparent effect on the decline.

1.8% spoilt STV ballot papers: unlike Bill, the Maltese don't know that STV is too complicated.

(PRSA Quota Notes.)]

STV is used all over the world in non-political elections (That is where there are no politicians to monopolise a proportional count solely for political parties.) STV has made hard-won progress in political elections, at state or local level, usually in freedom-loving English-speaking countries against their power-loving politicians. STV has many advantages, which are worth getting to know, so that BC can take advantage of its unique referendum opportunity on 12 May 2009.

David Schreck scepticism.

If STV is complicated, this David Schreck article needs a translation. FPTP does not elect "the candidate with the most votes" only the candidate with more votes than any other. That's the difference between (over-all) majority of over half the votes, and an unrealised majority.

The FPTP count is not finished. There is no finishing post. It takes STV to provide that. Mr Schreck means that in an STV two-member constituency, two candidates each need to win one-third of the votes, leaving the remaining third of the voters unrepresented.

In a seven-member constituency, seven members would each need one eighth of the votes, for a proportional representation of at least seven-eighths of the voters. The 2 and 7 member seats are just for the sparsest and densest populations. Most BC constituencies would have about 4 seats, with a PR of four-fifths the voters.

Some candidates get more than the quota or elective proportion of the votes in the multi-member constituency. Their surplus vote is not wasted but transferable to that winning candidates voters next preferences, all of which get an equal share, at a fractional value, of the surplus to be transferred.

The arithmetic of an STV count needs trained returning officers. The gain is that STV does away with strategic voting and wasted votes.

Mr Schreck states how decisive a minority was the BC Citizens Assembly vote for systems other than STV.

He complains that the New Zealand procedure was not followed, not mentioning that the referendum was by First Past The Post, which split the anti-FPTP vote between several reform options.

MMP was, as usual, the best known reform system, because small parties, wanting seats, know that the bigger parties are more receptive to MMP as a party-based system, while the public remain unaware of STV, which is a voter-based system. The small party lobbying for MMP gave it a small lead in the polls, which as Graham Kelly, New Zealand High Commissioner to Canada, said (in his Ontario Citizens Assembly submission) led the public to rush like "lemmings" behind MMP to avoid splitting the reform vote.

The main story, behind the majority of BC CA submissions being behind MMP, was an incitement by the then Green party leadership to support MMP even against STV. The result was a lot of their supporters sending in almost identical form messages, which showed no depth of understanding.

The whole point of the CA was to study the issue for a year and make an informed decision, not merely act on parroted instructions from the current Green leadership.

Then Mr Schreck says a new BC CA might go an entirely different way. But the Ontario CA were moving towards STV before the shorter schedule ended their decision while still in flux. Had the BC CA been likewise cut short, then they would have still had a majority for MMP. That is why mature study of the issue was necessary to come to a settled conclusion.

Mr Schreck seems to think the correspondent, he quotes, is wrong because he says so.

The No campaign claim STV is complicated and confusing and wont do.

[To top](#)

No to STV is campaigning that STV is complicated, confusing and doesnt do the things it claims it does, and they dont feel it is in any way a real proportional system. (LadysmithChronicle.com)

Such remarks have, as usual, been instantly and admirably nailed by pro-STV campaigners. Hardly anybody seems to be defending First Past The Post. The No STV campaign is concerned to split the anti-FPTP vote, precisely because they cannot defeat STV in an argument on its merits compared to FPTP.

So, just let's look how FPTP fares on the very charges brought against STV.

FPTP is complicated - not in the count which is simplistic beyond the point of gross negligence (and which STV puts right). But FPTP is complicated in the boundary drawing. If I had to be an electoral

commissioner, give me STV anyday for simplicity of implementation compared to FPTP.

FPTP is confusing. With the continual boundary revisions, constituents are continually being shuffled this way and that into changed constituencies with no stable identity as a community. With STV, the boundaries serve the communities rather than the communities serve the boundaries, so safe party men can monopolise safe party seats in single member constituencies. Also STV is far less sensitive to gerrymandering.

STV is thus less contentious and less time-consuming and less expensive. Population shifts can be met by one more or one less seat in any stable community constituency.

In 2007, Scotland used MMP for the Parliament, and for the first time, STV for local elections. These elections were held on the same day. Despite these unpropitious circumstances, there were less than 2% of ballot papers spoiled using STV. Whereas there were 3.5% spoiled papers, using the already tried system of MMP, resulting in an official enquiry and an apology.

This belies the standard complaint by opponents that STV is too complicated or that MMP would be a better system.

STV is a proportional count of a preference vote. Its opponents are canny enough to say they don't "feel" it is a proportional system, because the fact is undeniable. Also, its opponents cannot get over the fact that STV allows the voters to prefer, in order of choice, the candidates that best represent them from a better choice, including more than one candidate from each party: STV is truly representative democracy, eliminating the need for strategic voting.

Whereas FPTP has already cordoned-off the choices into single member constituencies, where each party presents its monopoly candidate. FPTP supporters effectively want the least elective of

elections, where the best choices have already been made by the parties for the parties. Naturally, the beneficiaries of the FPTP system of disproportional representation, or distortionate representation, are desperate to keep it, so much so that they have dragged disproportional representation into the 12 May 2009 BC-STV referendum, with its required double 60% threshold..

(The above letter includes an after-thought paragraph from an other letter.)

The National Post article against STV.

Bernard Shaw said of debate: Never argue, just repeat yourself. The National Post has reprinted the self-same article published the day before on 6 May as: Jonathan Kay on B.C. electoral-reform referendum: Say no to STV.

I, for one, took a lot of trouble to answer it in detail, only to find my comments by-passed here. [The comments follow:]

J Kay says "our perfectly functional first-past-the-post electoral system." This is just dogmatism. And wrong assertions about the Citizens Assembly have been refuted by members themselves. By the way, STV is not a "hybrid" electoral system, which combines two systems, like MMP.

J Kay doesnt bother to find out where STV comes from but just imagines. The first and foremost "theoretician" of STV, as a system of preferential voting with proportional counting, was John Stuart Mill MP in his speeches on Parliamentary Reform in the 1860s.

Opponents of STV talk about understanding the count, as if users had to be engineers before using any engines. Kays next paragraph starting "The idea behind STV..." is nonsense: it makes no sense,

because he leaves out that STV is a proportional count, and how that saves wasted votes.

Kay makes the usual inaccurate statement that FPTP elects the candidate with "the most votes." It sounds better than the truth: the candidate with more votes than any other single candidate and usually a smaller minority of the vote, the more candidates.

J Kay misses the main point of his statement that generally the candidates who get the most first place votes prevail. In the 2007 Scottish STV local elections, nearly three-quarters of first preferences prevailed in electing candidates. That compares to maybe some 40% with FPTP.

Even that scarcely does justice to the superiority of STV, which does away with the need for strategic voting, as FPTP X-votes are not necessarily first preferences. Even if FPTP X-votes were all first preferences, they are still inferior to STV first preferences, which are decided from a better choice of candidates, some from the same party, in a multi-member constituency.

The "loony tunes" first preference strategy is an argument - not an election finding - purists put forward to justify Meek method of computer counting STV, as New Zealand used for the first time in their official STV elections.

Even with a count as systematic as Meek, there are still possible logical objections. The science of elections, like every other science, is a progressive endeavor.

The public will not be "alienated" despite "eggheads" just because the No STV campaign hasnt discovered the division of labor. The STV count requires trained personnel but its specialists are respected as we all respect and rely on each others special training.

The Citizens Assembly decision of BC-STV achieves an excellent balance of efficiency, at some sacrifice to simplicity, in order to provide accurate results. It is FPTP which provides "unpredictable" results in BC.

The FPTP "link" is a euphemism for monopoly on representation.

STV is the only system that can avoid "ineffectual*" coalition. To do this, the voters can rank the individual candidates they most prefer, so that the majority that forms a government is from the most preferred representatives across party lines. That might lead to a coalition but it would be the preferred coalition of a majority of the voters.

No-STV post-referendum 2009 remarks (greenpolitics_ca).

[To top](#)

Letter 1:

I can't improve on Wayne Smith corrections and I also generally agree with Skinny Dipper, until the end, where wastefully venting ones energies, on the NDP or in public, is like telling people your cause is hopeless.

Voting method is still a primitive science because there is too much of a vested interest in the stupidity of FPTP when there are more than two candidates. If I may say so, an essential objective of proper electoral reform is to understand the basic principles of voting method that cannot be denied, however hard opponents try to ignore them.

The simplest voting system gives one choice (a single order of choice) for one of two candidates decided by a single majority of over half the voters. This is FPTP but it fails when there are more than two candidates, because this requires a vote that gives more than one choice of one candidate over another.

Instead, many candidates require the voter to give a multiple order of choice (not just a single order of choice given by the X-vote). This is the Alternative Vote but electoral reform cannot stop with reform of the vote.

The same logic applies to the count, where one majority of over half the votes generalises to two majorities of over one third the votes each in a two member constituency. That is a PR of two-thirds the voters. Three member constituencies likewise give a PR of three quarters the voters, and so on.

The point is that logical voting method generalises FPTP from a one-preference X-vote for a one-majority count to a many-preference, number order vote to a many-majority count. This generalised system of greater choice in the vote and greater equality in the count is STV, sometime called "the super vote" in Joe Rogalay book, Parliament for the People.

It's quite right that the Yes to BC-STV should go over their failed logistics and tactics, the battle for peoples minds, which the No-campaign won, at least among the less informed.

I hope to remind you about the basic right and wrong way of conducting elections, based on irrefutable logic of choice, which is what must be carried, or allowed to recommend itself, to the popular mind. On that basis, the public then can decide for themselves whether they want to keep the simplistic FPTP, which doesn't properly do the job for multiple choices.

If the public want another system for multiple choices, they should at least be made aware that there is one basically right way and innumerable wrong ways. Of course, the final choice is up to the people, no matter how perverse it may seem to students of voting method, like myself.

Letter two:

Bill Tieleman follows Bernard Shaw advice on debate: never argue, just repeat yourself. Such debate is no debate at all. It is dogma. He merely repeats STV is complicated, obscure and the constituencies are too big.

However often falsehoods are repeated, that doesn't make them true, though it may succeed in indoctrinating the uninformed through superficial mass media.

So, let's put the record right.

The STV count is "complicated" in that it is completed, unlike FPTP. Complicated though the STV returning officers job is, it is not nearly so complicated as the Boundary Commissioners job of continuously redrawing single member constituency boundaries that gerrymander themselves, even without the help of politicians.

I know which job I would rather have to do.

FPTP continuously rubs out local boundaries and stable community identity. And all to artificially restrict elections into monopolistic locations for place-men.

CA recommended BC-STV constituencies about as big as federal single member constituencies. Not too big then.

No-campaign minimalism is the same as those who claimed that democracy was not possible outside a city-state the size of ancient Athens.

As to the claim STV is obscure, in the sense of hardly being used anywhere, even in political elections, STV has some use in many English-speaking countries all over the world. What is more, it has a widespread use in non-political elections. In Britain, many professional bodies use STV. It is the system of choice for mathematicians, statisticians and computer scientists, for the medical profession, teachers and students, and many others.

These bodies are not "true believers," as Bill would characterise people like myself, but eminently qualified to judge for themselves his claim that STV is "such a flawed electoral system."

The No to STV campaign is a self-fulfilling prophecy that democracy is too hard.

8 august 2009.

Reference.

Dennis Pilon (Uni. Victoria): The 2005 and 2009 Referenda on Voting System Change in British Columbia. Canadian Political Science Review, 2010.

This article is a detached and comprehensive explanation of what happened and why.

[To top](#)

The Straw Man Referendum on the Alternative Vote in the UK.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Links to sections:

General letter.

To an [STV-supporter](#).

Response to Margaret Beckett [NO-campaign](#) president.

Half a government: one party-political Palace of Westminster.

Many more on-line [comments on Press articles](#) including:

Comment on [David Cameron](#) 18 february 2011 article in The Mail

["Saddos" comment](#) on (Andrew Rawnsley) Observer 20 february 2011 article for AV.

Comment on [Boris Johnson article](#).

[Further remarks](#) rounded-up.

[Referendum campaign launch](#) (april).

Comment on Vernon Bogdanor article: AV referendum. [The weapon of choice](#).

[No to AV campaign](#) leaflet.

[Refutation of Premier Cameron case](#) for keeping FPTP vs AV.

Comment on article by [Boris Johnson](#).

Comment on joint article by [William Hague and Margaret Beckett](#).

[Closing remarks](#).

Appendix: Awaiting UK referendum on the general elections system (*from 2000*).

General letter.

[Some cuts, to reduce repetition, are made to some of my following replies to articles.]

On 5 May 2011, a referendum is offered on what deputy premier Nick Clegg formerly - and now famously - called "a miserable little compromise" of the Alternative Vote. If passed, voters would be allowed to state their order of choice, 1, 2, 3 etc, for candidates. Voters could still just vote with an X, if they wished, so they would be given greater freedom of choice, with the option to utilise or ignore preference voting, as it suits them.

Proportional Representation is not possible in single member constituencies and that is just as true of AV as FPTP. On occasion, AV can give more disproportionate results. On other occasions, so can FPTP. The remedy is with PR, not with either system.

People don't know the truth that there is essentially only one voting system that is really fair. Until they do, we will continue to have these despairing discussions.

All elections consist of a vote and a count. The Alternative Vote reforms the vote properly but not the count. You could see this in the 2010 Labour leadership election (or the other party leadership elections). The parties don't allow an unpopular candidate to win on a split of the vote between two more popular candidates. The exhaustive ballot, held in separate votes, can be telescoped into one election (as "Instant Run-off Voting" as North Americans call the Alternative Vote) using a preference vote, whose order of choice, for candidates, is essential to democracy.

The parties know it and if they believed in democracy, more than themselves, they would honor it for all the people.

AV is a single member system, so it wastes most first preferences, maybe just electing, say, a third of them. Only the single transferable vote elects large majorities of first preferences.

In fact, STV elects both more and better first preferences, with a better choice of candidates than AV. STV allows voters to prefer between candidates of the same party, effecting primaries, a big democratic advance that career politicians hate (as was evident from the Plant Report).

Whereas First Past The Post is an open secret of safe-seat-seeking careers masquerading as individual representation of the people. A great book could be written on the history of sneakings into safe seats, like a party game of Musical Chairs.

With STV, multi-member constituencies can be drawn round real communities, the historic shires and boroughs or cities. There is no need ever to change them, only the number of seats in proportion to

population shifts. Big savings could be made on the running sore of pseudo-boundary revisions.

Again the politicians care nothing about communities, only about the most advantageous boundaries to themselves. This is nakedly the case under the 2010 Tory Coalition diktats. Labour and Tory have ever treated the boundary revisions as their tug o' war for partisan advantage (as chronicled by Robert Blackburn: The Electoral System in Britain).

To an STV supporter.

[To top](#)

if your Plan A was on offer I would accept it:

By all means let's have STV for local elections and let all the British people see it would work as well in England and Wales as it already does in Ulster and Scotland.

I agree that would be preferable to an AV referendum for the Commons. But you know as well as I do that the last thing most politicians want is the democratic voting system of STV that we should have for all official elections.

I agree with you but when faced with the only choice I'll be given: FPTP or AV for the Commons, then a lifetimes experience in electoral reform forces me to guess that: YES to AV is less foolish than NO.

By the way, the (5 may 2011) AV referendum will be as much a judge on the media and the British people, as it already is on the

politicians. The politicians have failed democracy. The media are likely to confirm their ignorant partisanship. And the ill-informed British people are likely to be intimidated against change.

At least that is what I thought until I saw the NO campaign patrons. Despite personally having some (decidedly qualified) sympathy for Margaret Beckett, the rest of the list is an incitement to throw a custard pie at the NO campaign.

Amusing how Michael Gove declined the honor of being a patron for the odious FPTP relic. As education minister, it would not have looked good for him to promote the illiterate X-vote against the numerate preference vote. An exception to the old age, of the two-party tribalists on the patrons list, is perhaps William Hague. He was a child MP-groupie, by 16, speaking at the Party Conference. Then, the two-party glory days were still not so far away. [Hague retired four years later.]

Hague is one of the Tory MPs who have North Yorkshire sown-up, thanks to the monopolistic single-member system, which AV wont change much. Some FPTP minority winners might be more vulnerable.

Response to Margaret Beckett, NO-campaign president.

(Her article in The Guardian, november 2010.)

[To top](#)

Dear Margaret Beckett,

Before disagreeing with you, by the way, I hope you, especially with your scientific background, will not give up bringing your party, packed tho it is with nuclear cronies, back from the folly of more nuclear power. For the sake of future generations. Enough said here.

As Plant commission member, you once wrote me a stropo reply to my criticisms of the Plant Report, which recommended the Supplementary Vote, which is just a one-alternative vote.

You make the usual incorrect statement by supporters of FPTP: it does NOT give the seat to the candidate with "the most votes". It gives the seat to the candidate with more votes than any other single candidate - an entirely different thing.

Hence, the Guardian CIF awards, using FPTP, gave victory to one right wing CIFer because the rest of the vote was split nine ways between left wing CIFers.

In Parliament on the Constitutional Reform Bill, the Lib Dems asked just how small a minority is acceptable to supporters of FPTP. You had no complaints about Labour winning in 2005 on 35% minority of votes. You politicians just dont care about democracy, only incumbency.

You know very well that nobody asked for the Alternative Vote, it was just the "man of straw" that was all Labour and the Tories would offer and are now impudently knocking down.

Even so, you can't do so fairly. Nobody has four or five votes with AV. What you mean is that someones vote may be re-distributed more times than another persons. Your objection is that people may have an alternative vote to FPTP wasted votes.

AV has an admittedly modest potential for making seats less safe, because, say, an Independent Labour candidate could stand against an official candidate, without splitting the Labour vote.

Talking about getting "muddled up," proportional representation is NOT a "system," it is a principle. And it is also wrong to say that principle "matches the number of seats a party wins with the number of votes it received."...

What you are muddling (STV) PR with is proportional partisanship by Party List or Additional (List) systems, a popular fallacy, I admit, but why should you stoop to it?

Half a government: one party-political Palace of Westminster.

[To top](#)

The Coalition is reducing the number of politicians by 50.

The Coalition is increasing the number of politicians by hundreds, packing them into the Lords on party lists.

The Houses of Parliament are turned into one party-political Palace of Westminster.

They will be pseudo-elected by two different voting systems (FPTP or AV) as a pretext that the two chambers won't have the same party balance of power. Tho, the only real purpose is to avoid one good voting system by employing two bad ones. Politicians want Britain as a party oligarchy instead of a representative democracy.

Party List systems are preference votes made by the parties and not the people. STV is the only proportional count that allows all the

people a preference vote. And that includes Additional (party list) Member Systems...

One-dimensional pseudo-democrats abolish the potential of the second chamber for representative elections in vocational expertise.

Life's a scramble and politicians are the scramblers in chief, leading the wrecking rush.

The hand-me-down assertion, that there is no ideal voting system does not imply that there is only a Babel of compromises.

The pursuit of knowledge or science is progressive. A century and a half ago, J S Mill MP speeches on Parliamentary Reform recognised the essentials of voting method for a mature democracy. The work has gone on ever since, despite poorly informed commentators on the subject. And, I can safely add that the democratic and scientific method of elections is the Single Transferable Vote...

The 2009-10 Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation regarded the parties as its "gate-keepers." That makes the rest of us Parliament gate-crashers.

1 december 2010.

Many more on-line comments on Press articles.

[To top](#)

Comment on Tim Montgomerie (from ConservativeHome), The Telegraph, 15 january

2011.

Tim Montgomerie comes up with the usual falsehoods: FPTP does not elect the candidate with "the most votes." It elects the candidate with more votes than any other single candidate. The more choice of candidates, the smaller the percentage of the votes the winner needs, because of split voting.

That couldnt happen with PR.

TM says:

"... proper proportional representation (in which the composition of Parliament precisely mirrors the total votes cast for each party)"

But Proportional Representation, properly speaking is exactly what it says: the proportional election of representatives.

Proportional representation applies, as a consequence, to all groups in society including but not exclusive to parties. Party List systems only give proportional partisanship.

PR properly speaking is the single transferable vote. STV is widely recognised, by those who've studied the matter, as the best system. For instance, it elects most first preferences, which can never happen in a single member system, such as Labour and Tory politicians have confined the terms of the referendum to, for that very reason.

Nevertheless, the Alternative Vote does at least allow the voters to state their order of choice beyond the most limited ranking that an X-vote allows: for either of the two front runners, if you dont want to waste your vote.

Comment on february 2011 Mail article by Harry Phibbs

(which provoked some commentators – I didnt, despite the provocation – to call him Fibbs).

[To top](#)

FPTP produces "clear results."

Comment: clearly wrong results: mainly one party dictatorships on minority votes.

"the person with the most votes wins."

False: candidate with more votes than any other wins: can be very small proportion of votes.

Phibbs: AV only used by 3 countries. -

Qualifier: But politicians will still use AV process for electing their party leaders - Tories as well as Labour (a fact Phibbs forgets) because they wont deny themselves an over-all majority result.

Phibbs: "those who back minority or fringe parties get several" votes.

False: Some voters will vote for one candidate in each round, others may vote for different candidates.

AV can give "perverse" results.

Qualifier: probably not as perverse on average as FPTP. That's because both systems retain MPs single member monopolies on representation. The "gift" is to the two-party control freaks from the least possible choice offered by an X-vote. AV would give more freedom of choice, so is a small progressive step.

Tho, only STV which also has a proportional count would give truly representative democracy.

Comment on a Telegraph article, february 2011.

[To top](#)

"An attempt by the House of Lords to set a 40 per cent turnout threshold..."

That would look good from a Tory party winning near an over-all majority of seats on 36% of the votes. Not to mention the previous Labour government winning a 60 seat majority on 35% of the votes. No complaints or thresholds against that by the winning parties.

" AV would then be the thin end of the wedge: soon, full-scale multi-member constituency PR would be introduced."

Correction: There is no such thing as single-member constituency PR, because you cannot have PR in single member constituencies.

P.S.

The concurrent Telegraph editorial also speaks from ignorance and prejudice. Proportional Representation by the Single Transferable Vote does not give disproportionate power to a coalition partner, because STV is not party-based. It is representative democracy of individuals, preferring candidates across the political spectrum, effecting universal primaries and effecting the nations preferred choice of coalition partners. STV gives unity in diversity of choice not dogmatic partisan division.

Comment on David Cameron 18 february 2011 article in The Mail:

[To top](#)

Politicians elect over-all majority leaders with AV. The public are second class citizens who have the least possible choice of a single X-vote.

With AV, every voter has a vote in every round. It is nonsense to say that some have several votes to others one vote. Some have to forego their first preferences, some dont, in succeeding rounds.

Churchill criticism of AV amounts to it not electing most first preferences. That takes the system he rightly supported, the single transferable vote form of PR, which a self-serving Parliament vetoed.

AV is a small step to STV.

David Cameron has gone down the Blair way of misleading people and will become as much distrusted.

Comment on 18 february 2011 Mail editorial:

[To top](#)

The Mail editorial neglects to mention that Churchill supported proportional representation. The single transferable vote elects most first preferences.

But at least the Alternative Vote allows the expression of order of choice, so that if ones first preference doesnt count, then a second or later preference might. AV is a small step towards STV representative democracy, away from the two-party tyranny of FPTP.

I could respect The Mail as a critic of politicians abusing the safe seat system of FPTP. But when they misrepresent any slight improvement to the voting system, they have historicly tarnished their reputation.

Comment in The Telegraph, 20 february 2011:

[To top](#)

Janet Daley,

Your first sentence is your truest: "I'm confused."

In a democracy, which you claim to believe in, the simple question is not whether coalition is better than one-party government (single parties are coalitions of interest, too) but whether democracy is better than oligarchy.

The 2005 election by FPTP produced a one-party dictatorship on 35% of the votes and 22% of the electorate. The whole tone of your article is that tyranny is better because it is more decisive. In a war emergency, decision may be all, but we have democracy to make wars unnecessary, because everyones wishes are adequately consulted and implemented.

At present, we dont have the election system to deliver a properly representative democracy. A self-serving Parliament banned the

option of the single transferable vote in a referendum. With STV you can vote for your preferred coalition by preferring individual candidates across party lines.

STV proportionally represents the preferred majority coalition that the voters want (rather than the oligarchically preferred coalition a single party has cobbled together to win on a minority vote with FPTP).

The Alternative Vote is a poor second best to STV. But AV would at least allow the voters to give their order of choice for candidates, which would give some indication of their cross-party allegiances and of the kind of compromises they might make, as distinct from the compromises that have been made for them within a single party, most of them didn't vote for, but which got in power, anyway, with FPTP.

"Saddos" comment on (Andrew Rawnsley) Observer 20 february 2011 article for AV

[Rawnsley jokingly called "saddos" himself and other close followers of electoral reform.]

[To top](#)

Dear fellow saddos,

Fear of change was the main weapon that won the No campaign to STV in British Columbian second referendum, which allowed the partisans off the leash from confinement to objective information in the first referendum.

The BC public, judging by a post-election opinion poll, believed a proportional system was necessary, due to the highly erratic results of FPTP in the province, but they also believed the No campaign assertions that the system was thoro'ly bad and too complicated and the constituencies too big, and (appealing to the herd instinct) too few places used it: Tasmania etc (as distinct from Papua New Guinea for AV).

The BC Yes campaign had huge support of 6000 activists and the No campaign practicly nothing on the ground. But the BC Citizens Assemblys successful labors to find the best voting system, STV, (banned from a referendum vote by Britains self-serving Parliament) which took them the best part of a year, was undone in hugely expensive thirty second tv adverts, as a basis for the general public making up their mind.

The No campaign admitted they used their expenditure almost all on mass adverts.

The BC Yes campaign adverts needed to state the advantages of STV instead of just the proportionality disadvantages of FPTP.

Also, the Yes campaign appears to have been at a disadvantage from a widely dismissive attitude from the media mob, the kind of comments that would be declared in contempt of court, under the sub judice rule, that the jury must not be prejudiced by uninformed opinion and be allowed to decide on the merits of the evidence.

Even David Cameron managed to whip himself into a frenzy of loathing for AV, for the benefit of his Mail article, the other day. Cameron and The Mail will tarnish their reputations for honesty just for the dubious oligarchic advantage of doing down the slightest improvement to Parliamentary representation, which AV offers.

Tho, of course, the Tory and other parties would defend to the death their right to use a variety of AV, instead of FPTP, for their own leadership elections, as distinct from elections for those second class citizens, the general public.

Drawing the AV referendum battle-lines

(politics.co.uk website, 27 february 2011)

[To top](#)

(It is the politics website introducer, I criticise for describing FPTP as giving an “outright” winner.)

Matthew Elliott heads the No-to-AV campaign – he whose book, *Fleeced!* I have reviewed and supported. (As with Margaret Beckett, who I support in her opposition to nuclear power, I don't have to support their resistance to AVs slight democratic improvement.)

Katie Ghose, spoke on the politics site, for the Yes-to-AV campaign.

Comments on the debate:

The First past The Post system does not give an "outright" winner. That is the whole point of an Alternative Vote to ensure there is an outright winner. Or to put it another way: there is no Post in the First Past The Post system. The Alternative Vote insists on the Post of an over-all majority of over 50% of the votes. That is AV insists on a basic democratic standard. The more candidates splitting each others support, the less votes a FPTP winner needs. In principle an oligarchy can govern on FPTP and does.

The Alternative Vote takes a small step towards better democracy than FPTP within a constituency.

The No-campaign complaints, that AV does not do more than that, are irrelevant. The anti-reformers wouldn't let the reformers debate a properly democratic system, in the referendum, that meets the remaining limitations that AV still shares with FPTP.

The single transferable vote meets all the objections leveled against either FPTP or AV. That's why the self-serving incumbent politicians have kept STV off the agenda.

We know from the Ashdown Diaries volume 2, 6 May 1998, that privately Blair wouldn't give Jenkins STV. (Hence, Jenkins' remark after about Blair being a second-rate intellect.) We didn't know that all those STV submissions, including mine, to the commission were a waste of time, because the one person that mattered in the country wouldn't have STV.

But half a dozen reports since Jenkins have more or less supported STV, despite more government obstruction and discouragement, including the current referendum.

AV, with ranked choice, is a small step towards STV giving (proportionally) representative democracy, and as such I hope we shall take it, despite the misleading opposition to any improvement.

The decisive factor on whether to choose FPTP or AV, in the referendum, is not Papua New Guinea and Fiji but the politicians' own insistence on using an alternative vote procedure to ensure their party leaders have an over-all majority of over half the votes.

Comment on Boris Johnson article

28 february 2011. The Telegraph.

[To top](#)

Interesting that the politicians insist on perpetrating the "gigantic fraud" of AV upon themselves, when they dont allow their party leaders to be elected without an over-all majority after a series of exclusion counts!

Or is it that the politicians use a fraudulent voting system (FPTP), as HG Wells says in his 1924 novel, The Dream?

Boris Johnson: "Why on earth are we contemplating this change for Westminster elections?"

Youve half-answered your own question: Because people like Gordon Brown and Boris Johnson and the rest of the two-party caste wouldnt contemplate anything more than the slightest improvement to democracy than the Alternative Vote, and then are in a panic that even this "baby step," as Clegg also called AV, could let in a few new voices into Parliament (against evidence of Australias two-party AV system).

Much of the No-campaign seems to be made up of parrotings of misleading information and crude attempts to prejudice the innocent public.

Take this Borisian beauty: "yes, it is indeed true that if you vote for the BNP you will effectively have two votes – one for the BNP and one for whomsoever you place second. Is that such a great thing?"

Well, to tell you the truth, everyone will have a ranked choice. In a single member system, it's not such a great thing for the BNP, because most voters won't make the BNP one of their later choices. The BNP are more likely to be elected by First Past The Post, which is no doubt why the BNP are supporting FPTP with the Tories.

Actually, it would be a great thing if the smaller parties, and Independents were fairly or proportionally represented. We have a system that does this: the single transferable vote elected 74% of first preferences in the Scottish local elections. (I don't think the BNP have that level of support to be elected proportionally, except with a regional list, like the Euro-elections.)

But the self-serving incumbent politicians keep blocking STV.

Blair privately blocked Roy Jenkins on STV (Ashdown Diaries volume 2, 6 May 1998). Six reports since have all more or less supported STV despite the discouragement of the politicians.

AV would be a small improvement because it does at least allow the voters their true order of choice, not the least possible choice of an X-vote, that leaves the dilemma of voting tactically to exclude the least liked candidate or wasting a vote on some most liked candidate not likely to be elected in the monopolistic single member system.

Boris Johnson gives a lot of guessed figures, as if we knew what the results of an AV election would have been. But that requires knowledge of voters' preferences. AV can produce more disproportionate results than FPTP but on average probably does less so. Both FPTP and AV are inherently disproportionate because you cannot have PR in a single member system. Vote Yes to AV on May 5th. And roll on STV, which meets all the stock objections that apply to party list systems of PR.

Comment on Brendan O'Neill article

28 february 2011. The Telegraph.

[To top](#)

The perfect public school boy objects to "snitching!"

What gives you your privileged position, your sinecure, to rain down tosh on the rest of us?

Dont blame me for the slight, the public has the "nous" to know better.

Science works in that it insists on standards of honest debate to ensure against deception, including self-deception, so that we dont merely believe what we want to believe. Politics fails so badly because it is as completely unscrupulous as the No-campaign.

For a century, the Establishment has been avoiding any attempt to make the voting system worthy of a truly representative democracy. The antics of the No-to-AV campaign are just the latest desperate attempt to manipulate public opinion by emotional fogging of reasonable reform.

This doublethink article from a biased Mail media group attempts to emotionly sway the public by pretending that an attempt to remove emotional manipulation, is itself censorsahip. This article itself could be said to censor all rational debate. Not a single reasonable argument given on the issue: Just a waste paper for the wasted vote.

Lest it be said I have no reasonable arguments, they are on my "Democracy Science" website.

Comment on article by Paul Goodman

(ConservativeHome). 4 March 2011. The Telegraph.

[To top](#)

Politicians will never give up the Alternative Votes exclusion count essential for electing their party leaders, with an over-all majority, whatever the outcome of the May 5 referendum.

David Cameron says AV gives the gold medalist runner the bronze. In fact, it is AV that supplies the winning "Post," of an over-all majority victory, that the so-called First Past the Post doesn't have. And this is the real "gigantic fraud" that Boris Johnson tries to deflect from the guilty "FPTP" system to the - comparatively - innocent AV.

Referendums have a way of showing-up the opportunists who hope to snatch an unscrupulous victory.

Paul Goodman seems to regard the Alternative Vote as a threat to the survival of the Tory leader and his party. Yet he admits this cannot be proved. It is sufficient, as far as he is concerned, that Tory MPs will say it. (Another article today in The Telegraph celebrates UKIP pushing the Lib Dems out of second place in the Barnsley by-election and predicts UKIP will become the biggest party from the Euro-elections - courtesy of a party list voting system, which the Tory party would also oppose for Westminster elections. (So would I.)

Likewise Goodman admittedly puts aside any arguments on the merits of the case for electoral reform.

Well, it has to be admitted that a way to win referendums can be by panicking the Tory party to panic the people, who have been kept uninformed by a media careless of democratic progress in the common interest.

An attitude of party self-interest indulging a ritual civil war is a sure sign of a broken society, by which should be meant, a failure to agree on free and fair rules of the political game, that all sides can respect and unite on, should occasion require.

AV takes the small step of greater freedom of choice than the minimum-choice X-vote. The single transferable vote would complete the process by electing most first preferences for a truly representative democracy - resisted by a self-serving incumbents parliament.

Up-dated 5 March 2011.

Comment on Ed West article, in The Telegraph.

[To top](#)

(9 March 2011: People who don't even know what AV is are about to bring it about.)

There is no reason why people should know about AV. Voting method is a specialist subject. The only reason for a referendum was to block the public having the same benefit of choice that politicians get in electing their over-all majority leaders.

The debate is one of prejudice from the No-campaign (Think: Nick Clegg for President with AV) and a small but significant reason for giving the voters a numerate vote and taking people out of an infantile illiterate X-vote that gives them the least possible choice - or as you would not say: keeping them in their illiterate serfdom to the party bosses so dearly beloved of the reactionary media.

Next step, the single transferable vote, which elects most first preferences... the politicians and their hacks have been obstructing for a century.

Comment on Tom Uttley article.

The Mail 18 March 2011.

[To top](#)

I didn't post a message on this but on reflection, it struck me as typical of the provoking yawn, yawn attitude of ignorant conceit, and hostile determination to sabotage any inkling of greater electoral power. After all, this is a question of the basics of democracy. It deserves treating with some respect.

Misrepresentation being the norm for FPTP, and thereby its supporters, he misrepresents AV as "mind-bogglingly complicated." This phrase was picked up in two or more online comments. In fact, all required of the voter is to be able to count up to about five orders of choice, if so desired: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, ... for first, second, third, fourth, fifth, etc, order of choice. One choice would do, which is all the x-vote gives.

These buffoons are less worthy of respect than baboons who teach their children to count up to three.

Nor is it hard to understand the returning officers work in an AV election count that has the candidates with the least votes give way until some candidate wins more votes than everybody else, an overall majority.

As in the second British Columbia referendum, it was known that by pretending STV is too complicated (where again the voter has to be able to count up to five or so to get the power of choice that an X-vote doesn't confer) they could reverse public support to public antipathy, from the first referendum to the second.

Further remarks rounded-up:

[To top](#)

This is the prejudicing against the education of democracy in a numerate vote. This is the snatching away a semblance of power to the popular interest in the small and grudging progress of AV.

On 18 february, The Mail editorial sided with a Cameron article against AV, allowing Nick Clegg to make a case for AV. Their on-line poll asked: Who do you believe, Cameron or Clegg? This personalised the debate, when Clegg was the most hated politician in Britain.

78% voted for Clegg on AV.

The articles appeared on the friday. The online comments on the editorial and Camerons article were not working till the next day. The Mail pulled articles and poll and all, by Sunday. Usually they leave the public plenty of time for poll results to gather.

The Mail group as journalistic prop of the No-to-AV campaign, to the Alternative Vote referendum, for at least two weeks in a row, put up propaganda as news articles which no-one has the opportunity to refute on the spot.

Mail on Sunday criticised a supposedly pro-AV web-site smear that has nothing to do with the Yes-campaign, as if it had.

Next week, 27 of february 2011, the paper copies a No-campaign poster: Nick Clegg as President.

So, the No campaign knows that Clegg intends to abolish the monarchy and make himself president?
What powers of divination!

The truth about the President Clegg poster is that the No-campaign unscrupulously used Cleggphobia to put people off the Alternative Vote...

And the No campaign believes that the Tories and Labour dislike each other so much they would rather have the Lib Dems in power than each other?

The No-campaign kept quiet about where it gets its funding from - a story, the Mail on Sunday news-hound unaccountably failed to sniff out, much less bark about. Like the curious case of the dog in the night-time that failed to bark.

The Mail group journos inflicted a relentless stream of prejudice against reform. Some received my above comments. Virtually no attempt at a debate, just propaganda or wrong-headed partisanship. Realpolitik not democracy is their stand-by. Their politics of force and fraud is shown by their abuse of publishing power: almost totally

one-sided debate. And by the unacceptable standard of argument criticised above.

A timid reform has provoked a running-up of pirate flags intent on despoiling it.

Comment on Simon Walters article. Mail on Sunday 20th of March 2011:

As support for No campaign grows, and even Don't Knows are ahead of the Yes camp...

Clegg: I won't use AV poll as excuse to quit Coalition.

[To top](#)

55 per cent of people, in a survey, confessed they did not know how the proposed voting system would work. One third did not even know about the coming referendum.

Yet their page spread makes no attempt to explain beyond one sentence. "Under AV, voters can cast multiple votes in order of preference and the candidate must gain more than 50% of votes to win."

[And this one sentence explanation is wrong: An alternative vote does not consist of "multiple votes."

This school-boy howler does give one pause which was greater, the partisan favoritism or the ignorance of the Tory Press.]

By way of debate, supporters are given one sentence: "Supporters say it is much fairer."

Comment on article by Iain Martin, Daily Mail 26 March 2011.

[To top](#)

Mail comments only allow 1000 characters, which including spaces between letters, is less than that number of letters. So, I did not have space to do more than repeat the essential points. The gist of this article was an attempt to sell No to AV on the popularity of David Cameron. (This from a No campaign that has discredited AV by treating it as a Clegg for President vote.)

At the same time, the article threatened dire consequences for the PM at the hands of a merciless Tory party if he failed. From Camerons already cited response, this tactic seems to have kick-started him into the reactionary line that AV, simple finger-counting numeracy, 1, 2, 3,... for voters, is the end of civilisation (Tory one-party dictatorship).

It is openly admitted that Tory funders have been tapped for funding the No campaign.

What should be a constitutional question by which all parts of the nation can agree on a fair game, has degenerated again into an obscene partisan power struggle to infect the electorate with their own prejudices.

Comment on The Sun, "AV will bring in fascism."

[To top](#)

30 March 2011,

[http://thesun.mobi/sol/homepage/news/3499181/ Conservative-party-chairman-Baroness-Warsi-urges-Britain-to-say-No-to-Alternative-Vote- system.html?mob=1](http://thesun.mobi/sol/homepage/news/3499181/Conservative-party-chairman-Baroness-Warsi-urges-Britain-to-say-No-to-Alternative-Vote-system.html?mob=1)

Comment: The No-campaign have been repeating that the Alternative Vote will favor the British National Party, presumably on the well-founded principle that if you repeat a falsehood often enough, people will believe it. Despite the fact that the BNP are opposed to AV.

The reason for this BNP opposition is that the BNP could not expect many cross-party preferences from voters for other party candidates, and so would be unlikely to make the over-all majority in a single-member constituency, required by AV.

Personally, as a democrat, I favor all significantly supported varieties of opinion being fairly represented in Parliament. That is why I support proportional representation by the single transferable vote, which is the one system that does that job properly enough.

Referendum campaign launch (april):

[To top](#)

DAILY MAIL COMMENT: The AV system is complex, costly and a democratic disaster. The official guide to the May 5 referendum, being sent to every home in Britain, sums up our present voting system in just seven words: "The candidate with the most votes wins." So how revealing that it needs more than three pages to explain the basics of the Alternative Vote,

My comment: the leaflet is wrong to repeat the No campaign learn-nothing know-nothing explanation of simple plurality voting. The candidate with more votes than any other – no matter how few – wins, meaning that so-called First Past The Post actually has no Post.

It needs more than three pages to explain AV, because AV is a new system to most people and anything new requires some explanation. This editorial lead is fatuous and sloppy, like virtually all the barbarian media say on this subject, and if on this subject, what credibility is to be given to much of the rest of what they say?

On the same day, from The Mail, this flippant caption:
CRAIG BROWN: AV, RSVP, RIP - vote reform made simple.

And this prejudicial and erroneous caption:
HARRY PHIBBS: "The AV would be a gift to the BNP."

Nevermind, Phibbs, that the BNP actually oppose AV.

Telegraph, 4 April 2011.

Blog by Ed West, on Yes campaign sinking even lower than the No campaign by air-brushing a black poet from a Yes campaign leaflet. (Not heard, to date, a Yes campaign response.)

Blog by Norman Tebbit claims that AV would cause disputed elections because the result gives a different answer when later preferences are taken into account to the count when only first preferences are counted, which he equates to a First Past The Post count.

However, Tebbitt assumes that X-votes are always first preferences, in a simple plurality count. This is generally agreed to be false, except now by Tebbitt apparently, for purposes of adding to public confusion on change. His party have been pushing tactical voting for themselves, as second or later preferences, instead of wasting your X-vote on a first preference for the Liberals, since the 1950s.

I don't consider myself a vindictive person, but surely there ought to be some sort of poetic justice here for the enemies of more voting choice than the X-vote minimum.

I suppose we have to agree with GK Chesterton that it would be intolerable if people always got what they deserve.

But it might make a refreshing change.

The same day, I asked a group of people if they had anything to ask or say about the national referendum. A few were in favor. Most didn't say. And No-campaign propaganda was dutifully trotted out:

Someone said that The Electoral Reform Society was hoping to make a business profit from the use of computers for the Alternative Vote count.

I had to point out that AV had been in use in Australia for over 80 years, long before computers were invented and still not using them in the count.

Someone else said how complicated AV is and how tiring it would be for her to do the extra counting.

(Oh dear! I said nothing. Nothing of the fact that other people would be glad of the job and its pay.)

Someone else didn't fail to mention the (not so far denied) air-brushing out the black poet from a YES leaflet. And immediately

changed the subject, as soon as I made one point of principle: David Davis not David Cameron won the Tory leadership on First Past The Post. David Cameron won on an AV procedure, so Cameron must believe Davis should be leader.

It was a depressing experience. As a discredited US president said: People get the government they deserve.

5 April 2011 update.

Comment on Simon Heffer article in The Telegraph, 6 april 2011: The PM should listen to his old tutor.

(Vernon Bogdanor has just brought out a book on The Coalition and the Constitution.)

[To top](#)

No doubt all that Professor Bogdanor says about the alternative vote is true. And that is why AV and not the democratic voting system, that he has so long and eruditely espoused in his books, was not allowed in the referendum by the two main party politicians.

Nevertheless, the alternative vote does extend numeracy to British voters, which does reform the vote out of its illiterate least possible choice.

This is a necessary tho not sufficient condition for representative democracy. I am no more satisfied with it than Vernon Bogdanor. But I do not want to condemn the British voters to innumeracy in the referendum.

It is curious how constitutional reform can go ahead no matter what cronyism it inflicts on the British people but as soon as anything in the democratic direction is afoot, there has to be a referendum in which the barbarian media can launch the sort of all-out tosh that has characterised the No campaign to AV.

The referendum has shown politicians and the media in their true colors. It comes down to this, whether you believe in realpolitik or constitutional rules that are generally agreed to be a free and fair game.

Comment on Andrew Gilligan article: AV is nothing to shout about.

Telegraph 11 april 2011.

[To top](#)

Heed the opponents of AV by what they do, not what they say. Whatever the referendum result, politicians will still elect their leaders by an alternative vote procedure to ensure their leaders command majority support, and never use FPTP. That answers how crucial the difference can be.

The No campaign doesnt believe its own nonsense, demolished here in part by Andrew Gilligan.

Britains mis-leader, David Cameron says "Trust Winston," as an opponent of AV. But Cameron knows perfectly well that Winston Churchill supported proportional representation. The Commons was even warned by an MP, in the 2010 Constitutional Reform Bill debates not to use Churchill to refute AV when he supported PR.

Churchill said: I would rather be one-fifth of the MPs for the whole of Leeds than one MP for a fifth of Leeds.

From AV giving preferential voting, STV, in multi-member constituencies, also gives proportional counting, the real deal in representative democracy.

Comment on Vernon Bogdanor article: AV referendum. The weapon of choice.

The Guardian, 12 april 2011.

[To top](#)

[I believe the title refers to the fact that in a dual, the weapon of choice goes to the asked, rather than the asker, of the duel. And that's why the askers got, for them, such a poor choice of weapon, in AV, as well as effecting little choice, as an election system.]

All true, Mr Bogdanor, but?

Aung San Suu Kyi did a Buddhist assessment of the four trials of democracy.

One is to over-come what I'd call favoritism.

Two is to over-come spite.

Three is to over-come ignorance.

And four is to over-come fear.

Needless to say, this infamous AV referendum is an orgy of all four vices.

The barbarian media have been "laughably biased" as one Mail commenter put it.

A stick, to beat the coalition with, refers to the spite vote, much in evidence from commenters on CIF and elsewhere.

As to ignorance, Andrew Gilligan in The Telegraph commented on a few of the No campaigns more absurd claims. Like Bogdanor he also poured cold water on the Yes campaigns excessive enthusiasm.

I always say that the single transferable vote is the democratic voting system, redeeming the first preferences, mostly wasted in a single member system, tho at least AV gives a preference vote, and so should be supported in the referendum.

Lastly fear: the Labour and Tory parties were too afraid to offer a campaign on STV and having dared so much as AV, the Tories and half Labour now have exaggerated fears that even this modest change will undermine them.

Comment on: There is an alternative to the fudge that is AV.

Telegraph editorial, 16 april 2011.

[To top](#)

Some good comments here.

Let's just mention again the editorial arguments against AV.

AV allegedly elects "the least disliked candidate." But that's better than FPTP which gives to many the next most disliked candidate.

Half the Tory vote and half the Labour vote are wasted to give these two parties a near monopoly of representation against all the other

diversity of national opinion.

Only STV (single transferable vote) would give us representative democracy: most first preferences elected. But at least AV allows the expression of orders of preference.

And for all AV limitations in this respect, one can see that its opponents don't believe their own arguments when politicians use AV procedure to elect their own party leaders and their own Select committee chairmen in the Commons.

I'm sorry but this editorial degenerates into a sort of subdued clinging to what Hailsham, in *The Dilemma of Democracy*, called "elective dictatorship" which he (as Quintin Hogg) had once embraced, on just this editorial's terms, in his 1945 manifesto book, *The Case for Conservatism*.

It is time to move from FPTP contests for one-party dictatorships.

The reactionary media need not fear that AV will make the Tory party beg for the proportional representation they have so unfairly denied the British people for so long.

drc wrote, in response to the above comment:

And peers, too - they elect their Lord Speaker by the same variant of AV:

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/SpeakershipElectionResult.pdf>

A PR exercise in the Lords?

Telegraph View: If AV is a poor system for electing MPs, Proportional Representation is in many ways even worse.

7:00AM BST 17 Apr 2011

[To top](#)

Comment:

So, The Telegraph editorial believes that compromise has to be kept within the Tory or Labour one-party dictatorships that afflict this country. And believes that its make-believe majorities in the Commons are a good enough pretence of democracy.

There follows a discussion on the problems of a PM actually having to compromise with people. The ancient Greek law-giver Solon was urged to take on dictatorial powers. He replied that the mountain top was a fine prospect. The difficulty was in getting down again - something which Thatcher and Blair were to find out.

PR "for the whole electoral system" - whatever that badly expressed phrase means - would "be disastrous for the country" would it?

There's no sign you even know what PR or democracy is, properly speaking, much less agree to it.

Comment on another Telegraph article, on 17 april 2011.

[To top](#)

Tim Montgomerie article, A Voters guide to the alternative vote, is actually a voters guide to the mentality of the party activist. The only point of view he appreciates, apart from that of Tory advantage, is the mirror-image viewpoint of his Labour opponents.

Eventually, he gets to the campaign difference over the BNP. Actually, the Tory chairman, Baroness Warsi claimed what the Sun reported on 30 March 2011, as "AV will bring in fascism."

This is despite the fact that the BNP are against AV.

Montgomerie asks with assumed innocence: What's all this about the Yes campaigns funds?

The Yes campaign have published all their donors ahead of the referendum.

The No campaign are taking advantage of the legal loophole of not having to do so till 6 months after the referendum.

The slur on a funder of the Yes campaign is conveniently not identified by Montgomerie. There was an insinuation that a firm stood to gain from the use of voting machines, which is unfounded because AV, as used in Australia does not use voting machines. That's perhaps why the claim is made so vaguely.

Several indignant Aussie commenters here say it is news to them that Australia is getting rid of AV.

I completely agree with those Aussie commenters here who regard the trashy level of this referendum debate as an embarrassment to Britain.

But the fact is that the unpolitical general public are easily swayed by propaganda. (I saw a small sample of the gullibility, timidity, world-

weariness, innuendo and evasion - the grubby imprint of the No-campaign on the public mind, which I hope is not too typical.)

The clear example is the two STV referendums in British Columbia. The first didn't allow other than a neutral factual description of how STV worked for people to make up their minds.

The second referendum reversed the majority by letting loose partisan propaganda similar to the No-to-AV campaign, sometimes using the self-same objections for the two different systems of STV and AV.

For example, they intimidated the public by pretending STV/AV is terribly complicated. They appealed to the herd instinct for timid conformity by emphasising how few countries use it - neglecting to mention how many professions use STV - or how much the politicians themselves depend on AV and will never use FPTP.

Comment on article by Nick Clegg in The Telegraph, 20 april 2011.

[To top](#)

Politicians cannot do without an Alternative Vote procedure to ensure their party leaders command an over-all majority. And also their Select Committee chairmen in the Commons and Lord Speaker in the Lords.

Cameron defeated David Davis for Tory leader. David was defeated by brother Ed Miliband for Labour leader, because the Tory and Labour parties insist on an AV and not a FPTP procedure.

An alternative vote, in order of choice, 1, 2, 3 etc allows a choice across party lines to show what we want as a nation, rather than the bitter divide we still are.

The single transferable vote, which elects most first preferences thru a proportional count, would have been much better, had we been given that option. But AV would be a "baby step", as Clegg once said, to more representative democracy.

Comment on an article in The Guardian, 22 april 2011.

[To top](#)

Martin Kettle is right: hatred of Clegg is cheap - ill-advised and downright wrong, tho he may have been. Blair and Brown became hate figures but only after many years in absolute power.

Clegg is hated both from the Right and the Left, both sides of Britains two-party system, which is institutionalised blaming the other side, for serially letting down the country.

Reactionary human nature and Britains reactionary politics will never improve while it can get away with blaming someone else. If there was as much determination for democratic reform or power to the public, as there is serial hatred for leaders, this country might get to manage its own affairs, so we have only ourselves to blame, when things go wrong - as they would - but at least it would be in our power to adapt.

An obvious current example is the AV referendum - a foot in the door for the British electorate - but No, the spite vote is determined

to use Clegg as a stalking horse to prevent even that baby step to popular empowerment.

Kettle is right, hatreds foolish counsel says more about the haters than Clegg.

Comment on: A Formula for Fair Voting by David Broomhead.

The Guardian 23 april 2011.

(Neither formula nor fairness that I could see.)

[To top](#)

Glad to see so many good comments here refusing to be blinded by science.

So, mathematics would "prevent much wasting of time" would it?

This article is a fair example of how academics have been muddying the waters - in the case of this here social choice theory, for over half a century - against any clear understanding of electoral democracy.

As this article states, the mathematics works on an assumption of preference voting, and also majority counting, in other words the Alternative Vote - in order to debunk the Alternative Vote.

The social choice mathematicians do not attempt to assume that First Past The Post is even worthy of debunking.

It is a classic case of: Brother, let me take the mote out of your eye. First take the beam out of your own.

The whole point of the limitations of single member elections is that you have multi-member elections with a proportional count of the preference vote. That way you get most first preferences elected (74% in the case of the STV Scottish local elections) and experimental proof that the system works well.

Experimental proof, as well as mathematical proof, can trump the arguments in science.

Science doesn't "try to design the perfect voting system" or whatever, it tries to make progress with what we've got - something the academics have so lamentably failed to do, since the great and generous-minded John Stuart Mill recognised the key to representative democracy, 150 years ago, in Hare system (the ancestor of modern STV/PR) and stood for Parliament to introduce the Bills for votes for women and PR.

Comment on article in Mail on Sunday, 24 april 2011.

(An article mainly about an article of clothing: what Cameron and Clegg would wear for the Royal Wedding.)

[To top](#)

The no campaigns war on AV for "President Clegg" is false, when Cameron and Reid pretend that AV gives more votes to small party supporters. What they really mean is that some people would have the affront to not always vote Tory or Labour, if given the chance to escape the hold of wasted votes with only an x-vote.-----

The Alternative Vote excludes the candidates with least first preferences until the candidate with the most votes wins. That's how Cameron and Ed Miliband were elected party leaders. First past the post does not in fact elect the candidate with the most votes, only the candidate with more votes than each other candidate, which is why first past the post does not have any post. The alternative vote supplies the post with its 50% plus majority "post."-----

The alternative vote encourages cross-party support, which the main parties would have to heed to win by 50% plus democratic majority in each constituency. Co-operation, as well as competition, progresses a nation. ----- Tho STV would be best.

Comment on Telegraph editorial accusing Clegg of mud-slinging.

[To top](#)

25 April 2011.

It was admitted in your sister paper, the Mail on Sunday on 24 april, that the No-campaign was using the unpopularity of Clegg to put people off AV.

The No-campaigns AV for "President Clegg" is a base and baseless abuse of the referendum.

As Ed Miliband said, this is not a referendum on Clegg but on the better voting system. Far from mud-slinging, The Telegraph editorial might have mentioned that Ed has actually come out as a mature and moderate spokesman on the virtue of a preference vote that can show areas of national agreement by ordering ones choice for

candidates of more than one party.
Pity about his party, tho.

What are the arguments then?

The No campaign dont believe their own arguments because they use AV for electing their party leaders.
So do MPs for Select Committee chairmen and Peers for their Lord Speaker.

When there is a prize or award to be fairly given, AV is the system used, e.g the Nobel Prize, Booker prize, the Oscars, the Baftas and many other examples.

So, AV is better than FPTP for single vacancies because it ensures a democratic majority in each constituency. (STV would be much more representative, which is precisely why the Labour-Tory duopoly blocked it.)

The opponents to change are absurd because they imply that there is no remedy for FPTP delivering MPs with as little as 29% of the votes in the 2010 election.

Why doesnt the No campaign be honest and just scream they dont want democracy, they just want their divisive little oligarchy which can foolishly ignore every one elses counsel, to perpetuate national self-defeat?

Comment on Telegraph view: The pro-AV camp's dirty tricks begin to back-fire.

2 May 2011. (The Telegraph view was mainly about Chris Huhne out-bursts. The paper says "Although the No lobby has played the odd questionable trick, it has avoided the snide and bitter tone of its opponents."

To correct this white-wash, a slightly shortened version of the following "review" was posted to the on-line paper on 3 May 2011.) [P.S. april 2015: The last sentence on Osborne was missing from my on-line version, presumably censored by a Telegraph moderator.]

No to AV campaign leaflet.

[To top](#)

One side of this glossy leaflet is taken up with a photo of a rather glum Nick Clegg propeling the back of presumably David Cameron into number 10 Downing St.

The no campaign could have posted a cheaper more informative leaflet. But as this is their pitch to the general public, we must take it as we find it.

Here then are their half-dozen reasons for telling the public to vote no to the alternative vote.

Firstly they say AV will produce "coalitions most of the time, with Nick Clegg deciding who would be Prime Minister by cutting a deal behind closed doors after the election."

Comment: The first point is actually a criticism of how the coalition was formed after the 2010 election. Apart from the fact that it was a first past the post election, the actual way the coalition was formed is a procedural matter distinct from the voting system that engendered it.

The eventuality of coalitions could be prepared-for before the election, so that the voters have a better idea of how the different parties might combine and compromise with each other in government.

In the event of a coalition, preference voting across party lines informs the nation which parties the public would prefer as partners in government. In this respect, AV is definitely superior to first past the post.

Much better, than either system, would be the single transferable vote because STV not only allows preferential voting across party lines but fairly elects the parties in due proportion to their support in the country and so makes representative government possible.

Coalitions are compatible with democracy, indeed a much more representative democracy if STV is used. The real point about coalitions is that first past the post is an undemocratic means to prevent them happening and gives least indication of what coalition the public might want to happen, if some coalition is unavoidable.

Moreover, there is no evidence of more coalitions from over 80 years use of AV in Australia. Also estimates of British general elections, using AV, suggest they would not have made much difference to which governments were formed.

John Curtice looked at the minimal effects, on Scottish local by-elections, of using the Alternative Vote for single vacancies (in between the full local elections in multi-member constituencies, using STV).

The real factor at work is the decline of support for the two main parties, so that they are less likely to be able to govern on their own, even with the gross handicap that FPTP gives them. All the more

reason to move to STV to ensure any given coalition is preferred by the majority.

The No campaigns second point is that only three countries use AV. The claim that "Australia want to get rid of it." is simply false.

[I read on the web that a BBC inter-viewer asked former premier John Howard about this. And he denied that Australia was going to stop using AV.]

Alternative voting is used by the politicians themselves for their party leaderships and leading positions in both Houses of Parliament, as well as in wider society for single vacancies and awards.

The no campaign gives a misleading impression that AV is too little used to be worthy of consideration.

In any case, this point does not address the question of the merit of the alternative vote.

Nor does the fourth point address the merit of the alternative vote, in claiming it will cost £250 million. Critics have said this cost includes the cost of the referendum itself and the cost of voting machines which will not be used.

Once introduced, AV would only cost payment for the slightly longer time to count more than the first round. First past the post is just a system that neglects to count beyond the first round. The negligence of FPTP may be cheaper on election night, by a couple of million pounds or so, but the cost to the nation of that unfinished count may be grievous in the long run.

Of course it was a waste of time and money to hold a referendum on a voting system, the alternative vote, which nobody really wants, even tho, in all conscience, we have to support it, as slightly more democratic than first past the post.

The first point was wrong in implying that coalitions cannot be democratic and in defiance of the evidence that AV makes them the norm. Likewise, the second and fourth points manage to be both false and irrelevant.

Only the no campaigns three remaining points properly address the question of the legitimacy of the logic of the alternative vote.

The third point claims AV "allows the second or third placed candidate to win. We would end up with third best candidates becoming MPs."

Comment: this point simply assumes that first past the post ensures the election of the best candidates. The fallacy of this assertion is that only the first preferences should count towards winning an election. This fallacy is compounded by the implication that an x-vote is always a first preference: that would be true only if there were just two candidates.

According to the no campaign third point, David Cameron won as the second best candidate for the Tory leadership, because second placed to the first placed David Davis, in the first round of the election.

The opponents of AV don't believe their own argument, because Tory and Labour will never use first past the post for their party leadership

elections, whatever the outcome of referendums.

As HG Wells said, voting method is not a matter of opinion but a matter of demonstration. The voting method referendum is based on this fallacy that authority prevail over science...

The nay sayers fifth point is "that's someone elses fifth preference is worth the same as your first preference." This may be true - at a stretch. Never mind, in principle it is right. What they really object to in AV, is not that it gives equal weight to unequal preferences but that AV would expose the extent to which first past the post does just that.

For instance, whether or not I'm allowed to state my order of choice on the ballot paper, my fifth preference might well be for a Tory or perhaps a Labour candidate. And if the truth could be told, thanks to AV, such a fifth preference might count the same as someone elses first preference for a Tory or Labour candidate. That is because my first to fourth preferences might very well be for fringe parties or independents, probably excluded in the early rounds of an AV count.

Such preferential heresy is definitely not what the two main parties want the general public to know, for information is potentially popular power over the duopoly.

The fifth point is at bottom a fear of preference voting because it exposes x-voting suppressing information relevant to a choice of more than two candidates.

The sixth point objects to AV on the supposition "that supporters of the BNP and other fringe parties would decide who wins, because they will be eliminated first and then their votes could be counted again and again for other parties. That will encourage other candidates to pander to the likes of the BNP."

Comment: This objection is that people, who are not supporters of the two main parties, would actually have an influence on who gets elected, probably one of the two main parties.

John Curtice surveyed the AV by-elections in Scottish local government and found they made little difference from FPTP.

Nor does AV pander to parties isolated on the extremes. The BNP and the Communist Party both oppose AV. They know that not many voters will transfer their preferences to them, which would give them an especially hard task of crossing the winning 50% threshold.

Once again, the no campaign missed the point in criticising preference voting. The real fault is with the single member system, which means that most first preferences are wasted, in the process of excluding all but one candidate from election...

The sixth point is also misleading, because everyones votes count "again and again" in each successive round, not just the votes of small minorities. AV is certainly no less an equal vote, in each successive round, than FPTP is in its single round, despite the leaflets spurious invitation to "Defend equal votes by voting No..."

Nor does FPTP ensure that "the candidate with the most votes wins." That is what AV ensures.

In short, the No campaign is a piece of Realpolitik, which says anything to get its desired result. With the money and the media support to get across its propaganda, it has not only swayed the voters but matched lobbygate New Labour for spin: false, irrelevant, misleading, biased...

Peter Osborne on "The Rise of Political Lying" awaits a sequel on his own sides fatuities.

Refutation of Premier Cameron case for keeping FPTP vs AV.

[To top.](#)

The Telegraph, sunday 1 May 2011.

Mr Cameron,

Firstly, you say to keep FPTP because it is simple.

AV is simple as 1, 2, 3,...

Even baboons can count up to three. (Laurens van der Post: A story like the wind.)

You say of AV: "It makes winners of losers and losers of winners."

Well, you ought to know, Mr Cameron, it made a Tory leadership winner out of you, instead of David Davis, with more first preferences than you.

Secondly, when you praise FPTP "effectiveness," you make a virtue of FPTP exaggerating swings as it did for Thatcher, giving a majority of seats on 44% of the votes.

Cameron is saying that swing voters, giving disproportionate change in representation, are most important. Indeed, the 1.6% of the electorate who dictate the change in who holds the marginal

constituencies are treated as the most important to target in campaigning.

This contradicts the No campaign claim that FPTP gives an equal vote.

Cameron confuses "decisiveness" with exaggerated swings. And the facts do not bear out that FPTP makes it easier "to kick out tired governments." The Tories were in power 18 solid years and New Labour 13 solid years.

Thirdly, Mr Cameron claims for FPTP, "efficiency."

Contrary to Cameron, FPTP is expensive and bureaucratic. That is because the main expense of elections is the single member system. If Cameron wanted a cheaper system that makes genuine communities out of constituencies, he would back the single transferable vote, where the number of seats can be adjusted to the population size of the community.

And you don't need the huge expense and waste of time re-drawing contentious artificial boundaries for the gerrymander-prone single member monopolies -- as the Tories now are so eagerly doing to repeat the trick of the 1983 election, when they virtually disenfranchised a quarter of the electorate's widely spread support of the Lib-SDP alliance, in order to secure Tory disproportional representation.

STV, which uses preference voting, was introduced "as easy as 1,2,3," in Ulster and was successfully introduced to the 2007 Scottish local elections.

AV would take a little longer to count more rounds than one FPTP round (and do the job properly) at an insignificant increase in

expense.

Fourthly, Mr Cameron claims "fairness" for FPTP with "one person one vote."

But AV also gives this in every round, as Cameron falsely denies (see below).

Camerons real complaint is that voters can change their choice in successive rounds - the whole point of having further rounds.

All that his argument boils down to is that he doesn't want the voters to have more than one choice. It is not an argument for only first preferences counting (if he believed that he'd believe David Davis should be Tory leader).

The Tory party and most of the Labour party are desperate to suppress the preference information that AV gives of support for unrepresented rivals.

Preference voting for freedom of information!

Cameron claims FPTP "is enshrined in our constitution and integral to our history – and AV flies in the face of all that because it destroys one person, one vote."

Britain doesn't have a written constitution for FPTP to be enshrined in. (Unlike Ireland which has STV enshrined in its constitution.) Nor is the existing voting system historic. England historically has a two-member system (occasionally more) representing the real communities of boroughs and counties.

Cameron continues:

"If you vote for a mainstream candidate who comes top in the first round, your other preferences will never be counted.

But if you vote for a fringe candidate who gets knocked out early, your other votes will be counted."

This ignores that the voters who stick with the same choice have their same choice repeatedly counted, in each round of AV.

It also ignores that when voters vote tactically with their one X-vote under FPTP, the same thing happens, as he complains of: a vote that might have gone to a Monster Raving Loony goes to, say, the Tory party.

That, according to Cameronian logic, "is unfair and undemocratic".

So, let's change it and go to STV, which elects most first preferences. Meanwhile, at least AV would allow voters to state their preferences.

Cameron then appeals to FPTP because it is what so many other people do.

But as Margaret Thatcher described of her non-conformism, it means not always going with the crowd.

If England had always gone with the crowd, it would have conformed to Continental absolute monarchy or dictatorship, instead of limited government. It is time to limit the overweening power of the two party system and allow a say for others, with AV.

Oh, and Churchill supported STV, which gives the best votes for the best candidates (most first preferences elected), the democratic voting system we should have for all official elections.

**Further post to The Telegraph article by
Cameron:**

1 May 2011.

[To top.](#)

Just to correct some-one who misrepresented me as saying that Churchill supported AV, when I said he supported STV.

Many of us know his famous quote against AV.

Churchill is right about AV but the same argument applies to FPTP, it is just that the preferential information of the voters true order of choice is not made available, as it should and would be, with AV.

Churchills express support of STV is equally deserving of fame: I would rather be one fifth of the members for the whole of Leeds than one member for a fifth of Leeds.

(Quoted in Parliament For The People, by Joe Rogalay.)

That would give a proportional representation of at least 5/6 the votes.

Any one only had to look up a couple of posts in the thread to my own entry to see what I'd really said but bare-faced misrepresentation is what the supporters of the misrepresentative first past the post are fighting for and with.

This ritual civil war will lead to turmoil. This should not be a fight at all, but a national agreement on free and fair election rules of contest.

Comment on Suzanne Moore article

Mail on Sunday, 1 May 2011.

[To top.](#)

According to the logic of the No campaign, David Cameron would only be the second best leader of the Tory party because David Davis beat him first past the post, until further rounds, allowed the voters, for losing candidates, an alternative vote for Cameron instead of Davis.

When Cameron and other nay sayers pretend AV gives more votes to those who choose alternatives, they are saying that the Tory leadership contest gave more votes to supporters of Cameron than Davis.

The No leaflet falsely says Australia is getting rid of AV and ignores how few coalitions they have had, in asserting AV means more coalitions, ignoring that coalition and compromise is a necessary part of democracy, as distinct from an alternating two-party dictatorship.

The No campaign imposes on most peoples indifference and ignorance and tells that intelligence is not welcome in politics.

FPTP suppresses preference information, that AV gives. Whereas the STV proportional count, of preference votes, effectively elects most voters first preferences.

Comment on article by Boris Johnson.

The Telegraph 2 May 2011.

[To top.](#)

Boris Johnson has so little of substance to say about the Alternative Vote referendum that he can only make a virtue of hiding behind the royal wedding to avoid discussing it.

The Supplementary Vote that elected him London Mayor is a system of one alternative vote, that is a second preference as well as a first preference (except that tactical voting considerations might spoil this).

It is the same system to be used to elect crime and police commissioners. A leading policeman in the Lords expressed concern that a full order of preferences was not offered, as by the Alternative Vote.

If you have only one alternative vote, then you still have to worry about possibly wasting both votes and not preferring a candidate who is not one of the front runners.

For London mayor, your supplementary vote will have to be for either Boris Johnson or Ken Livingstone, if you want to have a say in which one of them gets in.

A fully alternative vote does not close down your options so drastically, and certainly not as drastically as FPTP.

Never the less, the evidence from Australia and from AV Scottish local by-elections, surveyed by John Curtice, is that AV makes very little practical difference from FPTP.

This contrasts sharply with the estimates in The Times yesterday, which claim that AV would exaggerate the exaggerations of FPTP. This claim is in complete contradiction to the No campaign that AV leads to coalitions, in which the reviled Nick Clegg would be king-maker.

There is no systemic inevitability that AV would be less proportional than FPTP. Neither systems use proportional counts and voters

could, if they wished, vote exactly the same way with AV by just using one preference.

AV does ensure a majority are needed to elect a candidate, which is why isolated parties like BNP and the Communists oppose it.

This democratic advantage is out-weighed by the systematic rigging of the single member system so that the less concentrated support of parties like the Lib Dems is disenfranchised.

Testing FPTP to destruction will fragment the country into local fiefdoms. The Tories have already had to shed Scotland and will never again be a national party. But PR has ensured their survival there at other than Westminster level.

The Times was right, however, about the single transferable vote PR yielding coalitions. But they were wrong about STV yielding weak and indecisive government. There is no more democratically decisive government than STV produces, provided the voters know its power, which is precisely why politicians have blocked its recommendation by so many reports.

With the Jenkins report, PM Blair even got in to secretly quash STV before Jenkins made his public recommendation.

Comment on David Blunkett article to The Mail.

Posted 3 May 2011.

[To top.](#)

First past the post has no post, AV supplies that with a 50%+ democratic majority. It is essential to politicians leadership elections

and Select Committee chairmen and the Lord Speaker election, the No campaign just don't want the rest of us to have AV.-----

It is not that AV counts lesser preferences more often, all votes are counted in each round, it is just that those with different views to Labour or Tory would have some say in the outcome they are not best pleased with.-----

Mr Blunkett, AV is not a proportional system, as you say.----

All politics is more or less compromise, and the declining support for Labour and Tory mean that others should have more say. That's what you're resisting. AV would give a bit more say to the people. and a step towards STV which would also give more power to the people.

Comment on joint article by William Hague and Margaret Beckett.

The Telegraph, 4 May 2011.

[To top.](#)

Hague and Beckett confuse having more than one counting round in the election with having equal votes.

The fact is that with FPTP the result arbitrarily changes, depending on the number and the allegiances of the candidates. Whether or not some decide to stand changes the outcome.

If you have two left wingers versus one right-winger, the latter probably wins, though one of the left wingers might have won, if his vote was not split by the other left-winger standing.

This simple fact is the anti-democratic Tory case against the Alternative Vote. Whereas Labour was a dog-in-the-manger towards the Liberals. That means they would rather the Tories win than share power with a left competitor. The Blair era Labour deceived the Lib Dems over PR to help get back into power.

Now the Tories have deceived the Lib Dems with the token AV reform, that they have scuppered with a one-sided campaign because of most media and money on their side to get away with falsehoods, as in the No to AV leaflet, told to a deferential people.

If Britains historical situation were reversed, so two right-wingers split their vote to let in a Left candidate, the shoe would be on the other foot. The Tories might lose because of a split vote with UKIP and other nationalists.

AV addresses this problem. (STV would do so far better because its proportionality is more truly representative, which is why Labour-Tory block STV.)

Hague and Beckett pretend the problem isnt there, no matter how self-defeating FPTP becomes.

They will either go back to the bad old days of two class war parties or degenerate Britain into US and Canadian size turn-outs of only 50% of the electorate, because FPTP doesnt give voters a dogs chance (as H G Wells said) of expressing their wishes effectively.

Comment on Telegraph View.

4 May 2011.

[To top.](#)

The Telegraph view appears to believe that FPTP minority-vote one-party dictatorship fought over by Labour and Tories is better than anything else.

AV would allow voters to prefer candidates of different parties, establishing which parties they would prefer to work together. Tho, there is actually no evidence from Australia that AV does increase plural politics.

(STV/PR would be much more representative of all shades of popular opinion and show which were most allied for a preferred majority coalition.)

Democracy is about working together, not about oppressing your fellow citizens after an election as a ritual battle, which is what the No-campaign supported by The Telegraph and most of the Press has one-sidedly and so dishonestly fallen into - as in the No-campaign leaflet - which appears to have been what yesterdays Cabinet rumpus was about in part.

Comment on article by David Starkey: Yes vote would take us back to the bad old days.

The Mail 4 May 2011.

[To top.](#)

AV is better than FPTP with regard to forming governments, because the preference vote, 1, 2, 3, etc shows which parties that the people would most like to work together giving coalitions some democratic legitimacy. This would be much more true of the single transferable

vote which also gives fair representation to all parties and Independents, because of its proportional count.

Starkey ignores the democratic deficit of one party dictatorships on 35% of the votes and 22% of the electorate.

When the Tories get their boundary changes, they may have the disproportional representation of a 1983 type election, in which the SDP-Liberal Alliance got about 24 seats for over one-quarter (26%) of the votes.

[After losing the AV referendum, the Liberal Democrats blocked the boundary changes that might have given the Tories twenty more seats in the 2015 general election.]

Also FPTP disenfranchises about half the Tory and Labour voters, by wasting their votes, so that these two parties can monopolise Parliament. The majority of people, whose vote didn't go to the MP who monopolises each constituency, are not represented, they are patronised by their MP.

Closing remarks.

[To top.](#)

The mass circulation Mail offered very little opportunity for public debate on the AV referendum. Their so-called debate page only offers comments of no more than 1000 characters. You generally only get one shot. It is mostly moderated or censored. And the moderators can be conveniently lazy about putting up the comments.

On top of that, the only blog general enough to accommodate an actual debate is the Peter Hitchens blog, where comments have been banned mysteriously "for legal reasons." In any case, Hitchens devoted no more than 30 words on AV, on the fantastically weak premise that he didn't believe the Tories were really against AV and therefore you should say No to AV.

But then Hitchens' main contribution to debate, on the 2008-9 Credit Crunch, seems to have been an article that blamed a BBC (who else) financial correspondent Peter Preston for not withholding a report for a day - though journalists live by the day. That is what the word means.

Britain's leaders and media mostly remain wilfully ignorant of the injustices to democracy.

The AV referendum message was that intelligence is not wanted in politics, only an Orwellian mass willingness to believe what your leader tells you, without bothering to check the facts or the logic of the arguments.

The Independent opinion poll says that they will believe the No propaganda - by a huge margin of 30%. This margin is about as big as the 1975 referendum, when the nation was told that the Common Market didn't mean political integration in a European super-state. That the government knew otherwise emerged when the records were finally made public.

By the AV referendum campaign, the Establishment have shown themselves as much wilfully ignorant or anti-scientific as anti-democratic.

The AV referendum was a straw man but it scared the careering crows out of their minds.

Note (6 May 2011):

5 May 2011 was polling day for the three Celtic governing bodies, local elections, as well as the AV referendum, which was defeated by 68% to 32%.

The convention is that there is no campaigning on polling day. Voters are finally left in peace to make up their own minds. The Press broke this convention. The Sun carried an article, as well as one by David Cameron, to vote No to AV to "save democracy." (That must be news to Australia that they have lost democracy for over 80 years.)

The Mail devoted all its front page, like a bill-board to vote No. Both the Mail and its sister paper The Telegraph ran a cascade of No articles, on the day. A commenter complained how many no articles were The Telegraph running.

The Express also urged No, on the top of its front page, as well as in its editorial.

Appendix: Awaiting UK referendum on the general elections system (from 2000).

[To top.](#)

(Combined from two newsgroup postings: 10 and 17 June 2000.)

It's all very well for British Premier, Mr Blair to talk about individual opportunity with respect for the community - democracy, in other words - but his government has shown no respect for proper democratic rules in British elections.

Much of the fault for this is the ill legacy of the Plant report, which recommended different electoral systems for different British elections. Consequently, the British government has been pre-empting the reform debate by instituting its own favored voting methods, at various levels of government.

The British mainland has half a dozen undemocratic voting methods where one democratic method would do.

The Jenkins report got the message that the German system, adopted by New Zealand, allowed a small party, holding the balance of power, to choose a coalition.

Did the commission decide to abandon additional member systems? Not a bit of it.

As a last ditch attempt to promote a hybrid system of monopolistic single members and party list monopolies of the proportional count, the report cobbled together an even more complicated system of "alternative vote top-up."

The effect of this, speaking of successive elections as days of the week, would be that on sundays, tuesdays, thursdays and saturdays, the largest minority party would monopolise or hog government. And on mondays, wednesdays and fridays, a crucial small party could decide the coalition.

So, the Jenkins commission idea of justice was to try to engineer a Buggins turn between these two types of unjust government.

This is a system virtually no-one wanted but which British reformers largely are campaigning for, because they are afraid that's all there's on offer.

As a result, AV top-up goes noticably uncriticised by reformers.

The anomalies of AV top-up are so rife that they would be exposed as a laughing stock in a referendum. As a consequence, the referendum result would at best be indecisive and afford no lasting constitutional settlement that would secure general respect from the people or the politicians.

Blair (allegedly) supports the alternative vote (as used in Australian elections), falling back on a system thought by analysts to bind the splits of the left in Labors favor. But the alternative vote, minus a top-up of the small party bosses candidates, is deeply flawed, on its own account.

As electoral expert, David Butler pointed out to the Jenkins commission, the alternative vote is arbitrary. Even one voter, changing between two runners-up (neck and neck), can change which candidates second preferences are re-distributed, and give a disproportionately different complexion to the final result, including a different winner.

Roy Jenkins notorious remark in favor of the alternative vote cannot be defended with justice. He said words to the effect that people must often take second or third best in life, in jobs, housing and ones wife, and there is no reason why this should not be so in the electoral system.

This contention is grossly misleading. The point of the single transferable vote, STV (which uses a proportional count of a preference vote) is that a large majority of voters in a multi-member constituency are ensured their first preferences are elected.

Even in quite small Irish multi-member constituencies of three or four seats, some two-thirds of the representatives will be elected by first preferences, and nearly all the rest by second or high preferences.

So, it's fair to say that something in the order of twice as many voters will have their first preferences elected, using STV compared to AV.

Even the published submissions to the Jenkins report showed substantial support for STV. And the report gave no statistical breakdown of the mass of "ordinary" peoples preferences - making the excuse there were too many of them.

The "Independent Commission" impertinently suppressed independent evidence to suit the Westminster closed shop steward, laughably called the Prime Minister.

[To top](#)

The duncing of a nation: How misrepresentation won the AV referendum.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Links to sections:

“a regiment of lies.”

The [duncing](#) of a nation.

Foot-note on ["the liberal elite"](#)

“a regiment of lies.”

"My own conclusion, after 25 years in electoral politics, is that our system is deeply flawed and visibly deteriorating in both the quality and democratic accountability of its decision-making. I suggest therefore that public education is likely to increase rather than decrease public cynicism and what is needed is a more determined demand for reform of the system."

Clare Short: Political Studies Association / Hansard Society Annual Lecture on 29 October 2008.

(STV Action quotes.)

It is unusual for the third party in British politics to be so outspoken against its opponents. It seems even more outlandish to speak against the senior partner of their coalition.

Of course the Conservatives rejoined that the Liberal Democrats are just bad losers. In the local government elections of May 5, 2011, Labour appears to have gained about 10% of the lost 11% in the Lib Dem vote.

And they lost their precious alternative vote referendum by 68% to 32%, a humiliating defeat.

In The Observer, eighth of May 2011, Andrew Rawnsley pointed out that Tories exacted compromise from the Lib Dems for the coalition, and then ran a No campaign against AV, on the grounds that the Lib Dems were breaking their promises in coalition.

This was despite the fact that Australia, over 80 years with AV, showed quite the contrary to the No campaign assertion that AV leads to more coalitions.

The No campaign also exploited Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg's unpopularity with an outrageous depiction of AV leading to "President Clegg."

The Lib Dem energy minister Chris Huhne took Tory Cabinet colleague Baroness Warsi to task over her claim that AV helped the BNP. The newspaper the Sun translated this into the caption that AV will bring in fascism.

This was despite the fact that the BNP were opposed to AV. One can see why, from the BNP candidate locally elected FPTP to Stoke on Trent, Abbey Green on 27% votes. The vast majority of other voters wouldnt have given them any ranking with preference votes, so the BNP would have had no hope with the Alternative Vote.

One has to realise that the truth was the first casualty in this war of words for a referendum. The truth was of no interest to the No campaign. Their web-site allowed no debate. The No to AV campaign was a *No to Debate AV* campaign.

Ex-leader of the Lib Dems, Paddy Ashdown accused the No campaign of marshalling "a regiment of lies."

As I say, it is extraordinary for politicians to be quite so forthright about each other. It would not only be unusual but unwise to use such unparliamentary language, unless the evidence was clear-cut.

Had it not been for the fact that nobody really wanted the alternative vote for general elections, the No campaign misconduct could have caused a constitutional crisis.

It would be well advised for any future referendums to be conducted on stringent standards of factual correctness, subject to impartial adjudication by a refereeing body. And there would have to be ample prime time reservations in the broadcasting schedules for debates equally represented by both sides.

The hugely biased Press should be answerable to a pre-Reagan American-style Fairness doctrine. And transparency, as to who are their business backers, is as important in journalism as politics.

The mass circulation press was overwhelmingly biased against electoral reform. The Sun, The Mail, The Telegraph, The Times, The Express, all urged No to AV, often with hysterical insistence, right up to and including polling day itself, which is supposed to be sacrosanct from campaigning.

The large circulation paper, The Mirror didn't come off the fence, till the end of the campaign, to support Yes, mirroring the mostly sceptical Labour party.

Only The Independent, an ailing paper, taken over for the sum of one pound sterling, consistently supported reform since 2005. The Guardian and its Sunday sister The Observer also said Yes.

In short, the AV referendum was not a debate but an indoctrination.

[To top](#)

Television is supposed to be unbiased but it didn't have that effect. The prime time news programmes passed on the assertions of the campaigners without serious challenge. From the Prime Minister down, falsehoods were allowed to go unchecked.

For instance, it is nonsense that AV gives more votes to some smaller party supporters than to large party supporters. Everyone has a vote to be counted, tho the candidate with least first preferences be excluded in each successive round, until some candidate wins with an over-all majority of votes.

The real objection to AV is to voters being allowed to vote for other than two parties, without wasting their vote on other than those two main contenders.

The voting system, as a straight fight between two parties, the FPTP denied more than this minimum choice, was basically the only honest argument the No campaign could have led with.

They didn't have the confidence to do so. But the voters themselves may still have voted accordingly. Given the over-whelmingly partisan No-campaign, betraying society's dependence on a constitutional consensus, the referendum result may well largely reflect Labour-Tory tribalism ganging-up on the rest of the voters.

A general election still gives two-thirds of the votes to Labour or Tory. And that is about what won the referendum, on a turn-out of 42%.

One of the consequences of this referendum's status quo result may be to see British general election turn-out sink further to American levels of about 50%, with the retention of the duopolistic FPTP system.

Another warped plank of the No campaign was that First past the post "defends equal votes."

All FPTP does is confine an election to a single round. Whereas AV conducts further rounds, if necessary to achieve a decisive majority of more than half the votes, to elect a candidate.

Far from the simple majority system defending equal votes, what it does is make the outcome of the election dependent on which candidates happen to stand.

The alternative vote holds successive rounds to remove the accident of spoiler candidates arbitrarily changing the result. AV gives the result that the voters would want regardless of whether some candidates stood or withdrew.

AV removes some of the more blatant injustices of FPTP. Relative to the two systems, it is no argument against AV that it does not

remove them all.

TV news programmes are repeated, so any campaigning falsehoods, show-cased on them, effectively become indoctrination. Whereas, the only serious AV referendum debate I saw was on late night television, BBC Newsnight at 10.30. Proper debate, of this sort, instead of recycled news time campaign propaganda, might have changed the whole course of the campaign. This was a fairly balanced two-sided debate, wholly lacking in the mass circulation press.

Referendums that protect one side from critical scrutiny are worse than useless to the national interest.

Likewise, allowing one side to spend much more money on reaching many more people with its side alone of the argument again proves nothing but that battles are won by the side with the best logistical support.

The No campaign (unlike the Yes campaign) refused to make public its financiers, not obligatory till six months after the poll. But it is clear from articles in The Mail that it came from Tory party funders. This was a partisan conflict of interest with the national interest.

Nevertheless, the No campaign claimed - including the Tory Chancellor George Osborne, saying it stank - that Electoral Reform Society support stood to gain from a costly use of voting machines with AV, tho these are not used in Australia and there are no plans to use them.

According to an article, eighth of May 2011 in Mail on Sunday, by Tim Montgomerie, the alleged cost of AV was the most important of 33 public objections against the new voting system. Yet this supposedly most important objection was phoney.

It would only have been necessary to pay the returning officers staff for the extra time to count the successive rounds of the alternative vote, and do the job properly, that first past the post leaves undone, maybe a couple of million pounds sterling, certainly not £250 million.

The real waste of money is the constant changing of gerrymander-prone single member boundaries. To remedy that would require a multi-member system following real community boundaries and just changing the number of seats per constituency, in proportion with population shifts.

The No campaign determination to be on the offensive was indeed offensive in its false witness. This is fundamentally wrong for all social conduct, as well as towards first principles of political behavior enshrined in a Constitution. The whole point of the rules of the game is that they are agreed on all sides to be free and fair and the means by which any one side can have recourse to remove a jam of disagreements.

Short of that, you don't have a genuine civil society, only a ritual civil war which may degenerate into turmoil.

The AV referendum exposed the disastrous failure of the Conservative party as a supposedly constitutional party, along with the bulk of the Labour Party, to be more than political barbarians, led by that well-mannered aristocrat and self-confessed "heir to Blair," David Cameron.

Tories eased their consciences by lauding the referendum result as a triumph for the man, whose top office they pushed into propagandising for them. This condemner of compromise has most badly compromised himself. The man, who condemned essentially the system of successive ballot rounds, that elected him Tory leader, deserves to be defeated, as he would have been, under First Past

The Post.

When a leader becomes a misleader, who will believe he believes anything he says? He has sold the balance of his reputation, to cry wolf, to the politically naive. And all to sink the Alternative Vote.

The duncing of a nation.

[To top](#)

It is evident that the word-warriors of the No campaign have learned nothing from their folly.

“In Haringey and Hackney humility hardly ever happens,” crowed Richard Littlejohn, in the Mail, 10 May 2011.

This was because a few London boroughs had dared to offer a slight majority for the alternative vote, as did university towns Oxford and Cambridge, standing out from the rest of the country, like medieval isles of learning in a sea of political illiteracy.

The numeracy of the Alternative Vote at least offers a choice beyond just one candidate over another.

Littlejohn boasted that he could have told you which London roosts of the leftists would vote for AV.

As likely an explanation is that London elects its mayor with a Supplementary Vote, which gives one alternative vote. And so breaks the superstition of the Labour-Tory tribal tabu on elections that hold more than one round, which is all that FPTP offers.

Since when has Richard Littlejohn, whose catch-phrase is: “You couldn't make it up,” ever offered humility?

The editor of the Mail on Sunday, 8 May 2011, said there was "nothing seriously wrong" with first past the post.

A New Zealand opinion poll, on 9 May 2011, showed that younger people favored the recent Mixed Member Proportional system, and older people preferred the former FPTP. This finding suggests that people tend to accept uncritically what they are used to.

I know that this is true of myself. As a young student, unwilling to study voting method, I thought I knew all about, because I watched election night. I didn't see anything wrong with the existing system of elections.

The general public and the Mail editor haven't had my advantage of having no choice but to study the subject, that being what students are supposed to be for.

There is one huge difference between my foolish ignorance and theirs. My prejudice was over 40 years ago, when electoral reform was nowhere on the horizon. And the Liberal party was a joke.

While I spent a lifetime of solitary study on the subject, there has been a more or less continuous public campaign against the iniquities of first past the post, and many vote system "tinkerings," as the right wing press would call them. But they are none the wiser.

Wilful ignorance towards electoral reform encourages wilful ignorance to the public interest in general.

I once saw a silly polemic of a caption (in The Guardian) that the country "needs bad teachers."

A bad teacher can ruin a subject for a child, demoralise the child into thinking that they are no good at something - or anything - that they

might be able to do perfectly well, and pretty well blight their young life.

That is a misfortune but at least it is not a sabotage of ones education.

Imagine you wanted to go on a course to be educated in some subject.

And in response, you are told that it is much too expensive for you.

Moreover, you are told the subject is much too difficult for you.

And finally to put you off completely, you are told that the head teacher and his college, you will have to go to, are the ones you will loathe for a deceptive prospectus.

This is how the No campaign conducted themselves against the alternative vote in the referendum. As told by Tim Montgomerie, their three main arguments were that it was too costly, too complicated, and too Nick Clegg.

No matter to the No campaign that these three arguments manage to be both false and irrelevant; all that mattered, to them, is that their lack of scruples won the referendum for them.

They made little attempt at all to educate the public, so that they could make up their own minds. Their campaign was one long tirade of misinformation, deception and denigration.

They were not even bad teachers, they were just mindless anti-teachers, not educators but duncers and stupefiers.

No-campaign antics brought-up a disagreeable memory of misconduct in my childhood. A school dinner, not to my taste, made me relentlessly bad-mouth it, to put-off an undecided child from eating.

I was punished, tho arguably school dinners are punishment enough in themselves.

Obviously, inflicting ones childish prejudice, on others, against something we are not used to, is nothing to be proud of, and the anti-reformers have shown themselves to be guilty of that.

Foot-note on "the liberal elite"

[To top](#)

Why the liberal elite get it so spectacularly wrong.
Tim Luckhurst, 14th May 2011.

This is a sanctimonious article centred on the mere 10 constituencies that had AV referendum majorities.

I cannot do better than quote the following comment:

[Luckhurst says:] "Never again should a tiny, incestuous elite be allowed to impose its wild, unrepresentative delusions on middle Britain."

[Commenter:] What a ridiculous summary. The AV campaign was supported by wide cross-sections of society. My mother, a small business owner who doesn't know the meaning of the word "elite" supported it, as did many ordinary people all over the country, who saw it as a much more common sense system than FPTP which wildly favours the Labour/Conservative axis.

The reason it failed was because the Tory party machine and Rupert Murdoch's media conglomerate, including the DM, organised themselves actively told lies about AV.

And because of that we will be stuck for another generation with a voting system that routinely returns the same MP in the same constituency at every election in safe seats, and routinely gives parties winning about 38% of votes an absolute majority over all other parties in the House of Commons.
Just stop telling lies....you've won the referendum already.

- Rob, Cardiff, 15/5/2011 03:34

(Rob of Cardiff may be forgiven for apparently confusing the Murdoch press with The Mail, once described as "The black-top Sun.")

References:

This comprehensive refutation:

[A-Z of rubbish arguments from No to AV.](#)

For a record of how the AV referendum campaign was conducted, I wrote innumerable comments especially on the articles of the right wing press, and on the infamous No-campaign leaflet, collected in my chapter, The Straw Man referendum on the alternative vote in the UK.

14;15;18 May 2011.

[To top](#)

When knowledge fails belief: referendums.

[To Table of Contents](#)



The Frankenstein monster

Links to sections:

Referendums may not sanction censorship.

The problem of voting [method](#) applies to referendums, too.

Formal and informal role of [STV](#) in effecting referendums.

Referendums and representations [complement](#) each other.

Boris Karloff in the [mirror](#).

[Paradox](#) of electing an election: a referendum on PR.

Referendums in relation to a Bill of [Rights](#).

Referendums may not sanction censorship.

Rudyard Kipling wrote an enthusiastic story about *The village that voted that the world is flat*. Both a fact and a value are here established: that this parish is parochial and has a right to be. We could only take exception to this result if the village were to give the lie to itself by becoming imperial and trying to impose its mind-set the world round.

James Michener was voted a national treasure by Americans. Tho, he said *The World Is My Home*, as his one-man library of bumper novels shows. A minor theme of *Space* is the growing success of Bible fundamentalists in banishing Darwin theory of natural selection from schools. Referendums may help to accomplish this.

Darwin loved the accounts, in *Genesis* and *Paradise Lost*, of the creation of separate species. It was a torment to him to break away to the conception of evolution. And evolution itself is an old idea. It was his theory of natural selection that gave it at least the makings of a plausible way of happening, so one could no longer doubt that life did evolve.

Evolution is one of the great working principles of scientific research. Nothing may be absolutely certain but to try to suppress this line of thought is to seek refuge in ignorance.

Some scientists, whose work is confined to natural phenomena, cannot resist passing off materialist dogmas on the public as "science" - as if that meant their naive assumptions about life, death and everything were to be believed without question.

Naturally, the religious are sore at this scorched-earth invasion of their spiritual territory but the answer is not censorship of Darwinism or "science." Milton (*Areopagitica*) showed long ago that a free press can be "heretical" by picking and choosing the best from all sides of an argument. Wilful ignorance depends on tyrannical suppression with its uninformed stupidities and ruinous follies.

Nor will it do to say that referendums are a legitimate democratic means by which parents can select what they wish taught their children. This argument confuses democracy with what Mill called maiorocracy, the tyranny of the majority. Any majority is usually only a local majority, anyway. So, upholding the rights of minorities is more or less upholding the rights of us all, in different circumstances. Therefore, democracy cannot be used as an argument for censorship. A referendum to stop teaching Darwinian theory, or anything else for that matter, in schools does not have democratic legitimacy.

By the way, censorship is an unlawful concept, if it means stopping people say what other people think might be harmful, in some (vague) way. Censorship is like putting everyone in handcuffs for crimes we might commit.

But that doesn't mean one can say anything, without regard to the consequences. One may be prosecuted for inciting to crime, as with hate propaganda.

What gets on a school curriculum, or to what extent there should be set subjects, is another question. Sure, you can have a vote on it, but the preferences or ranked choices of subjects (you don't want only one or two) should be proportionally represented. That way minority interests get their fair share, and no more, of resources. That is a way for achieving consent in the community. Even if that is a good method, it does not pretend to be perfect. It can not excuse

ruling out any child's educational needs, say, with regard to unique talents or handicaps.

The prophet might tell patriarchal gatherings that their wives, children and dependants existed for God's purpose and not their own.

The problem of voting method applies to referendums, too.

[To top.](#)

The kind of referendums, just talked about, are known as Initiatives. These are referendums in which members of the public (not members of a legislature) take the initiative in proposing a law. A large number of nominations are usually required, before the campaign can become official. To become law, the Initiative in question will need a majority of a quorum, which is a turnout of enough of the electors, to uphold the result.

Initiatives are perhaps the nation states closest approximation to the Ancient Greek city states direct democracy. In the classical architecture of Washington government buildings, the very stones speak of this legacy. How is one to argue there is no place for general participation of large populations in legislation? Such an argument says nothing against initiatives in local government, nor at what scale they are supposed to be of no use - some size comfortably above the Swiss federation, evidently.

The question is urgent, because direct democracy now has the practical form of electronic democracy. And it is no longer possible for detractors to shrug that only representative democracy is feasible with large populations.

Indeed, there are some who say that representative democracy has so poorly served peoples wishes, that we should use new electronic mass forums to by-pass self-serving legislatures.

In this scenario, interactive mass media are the peoples debating chamber and voting lobby. As never before, popular consent could be secured on each and every issue. We would be, as Arthur C Clarke said, in "a world without politicians." Except, this is no longer science fiction.

However, certain questions remain. A referendum (or an Initiative) is subject, as representation is, to the problem of electoral method. Replacing representations with referendums would do nothing to solve that problem of how individual votes add up to the wishes of a community.

If electronic democrats fail to realise this problem, they repeat the mistakes in voting method that are still made over representative democracy. The very concept of "representative democracy" has been losing ground, because the parties favor voting methods that reduce voters to party supporters, rather than people, who might aspire to having wishes of their own to be represented. Politics has become largely irrelevant and politicians despised and despising.

Giving everyone a legislative vote on each and every issue, by computer, does not make that vote any more effective for electing issues than it was for electing representatives. An x-vote for one of two choices is still the most limited kind of choice, whether it is a choice between one of two candidates or a choice between one of two options.

The two options may be no more agreeable than the two candidates. This most limited of voting systems will split the vote between a

range of issues on offer as surely as it splits the vote between more than two candidates.

In short, illogical voting method will frustrate most peoples wishes, quite as much thru referendums, as thru representations.

Formal and informal role of STV in effecting referendums.

[To top.](#)

The voting method that applies to elections in general has the characteristic of a scientific theory. There is no reason to suppose the single transferable vote isnt equally applicable to referendums, as to representations.

The preferring of individual candidates on individual issues allows voters to initiate spontaneous and effective referendums. STV gives ordinary voters the power of the Initiative, without all the extra constitutional machinery and collective action required for formal Initiatives.

Transferable voting also makes informal referendums possible, that is to say informal Initiatives from the top. Certain politicians may agree with their party on some issues but disagree on another issue too important to be ignored.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Conservative, Lord Hugh Cecil found his party captured by Joseph Chamberlain for tariff reform. He couldnt go over to the Liberals, who still supported free trade, because he opposed their home rule policy.

Cecil favored the single transferable vote, so that unionist free traders, like himself, could urge people to first prefer Tory unionist free traders and then prefer Liberal or other unionist free traders. In

turn, his Liberal counterparts could have urged their supporters to extend their preferences to Tories like Lord Hugh.

Of course, the people could have done the opposite and preferred tariff reform home rulers. That's democracy. But they couldn't do either, with a non-transferable vote, which effects a partisan censorship on half the four permutations of choice. Any policy package not made up by the parties is heresy to their oligarchies.

Democracy needs both the informal Initiatives or referendums offered by transferable voting and Initiatives or referendums, in the usual sense of an organised popular campaign for a single-issues election into law.

Transferable voting is necessary because people should have effective choice on issues without having to be perpetual activists. STV quietly effects the voters own personal referendums on decisions of national destiny, without having to become nationalists - and indeed effects primaries, without voters having to become partisans.

But, sometimes, one may feel one has to join a party or a national campaign. The referendums single-issue election is to the latter what general elections are to the former. As Dicey said, the referendum puts the nation above party. It has its place in a democracy.

Referendums and representations complement each other.

[To top.](#)

Note that a referendum or Initiative still has to have its initiators or leaders or it would never happen, much less address the public.

These heads must be popularly elected as most representative of the cause.

Conversely, representatives may themselves become issues, as to their standing on issues, or whether their characters make them suitable leaders. Leadership is itself an issue, even if it goes by the name of chairman or spokesperson in supposedly advanced parties.

Internet utopians, who believe electronic democracy would be better replacing representative democracy, are sadly mistaken. The distinction between direct democracy (electronically making referendum results the norm of democratic decision-taking) and representative democracy is not the difference between a democracy and a republic.

Referendums and representations are both democratic when they use the democratic method of elections. What is needed in politics and economics is not to take away that power of representation, which would only reinforce corporate power, but to give voters effective, indeed scientific, method of election.

One has to emphasise that direct democracy, which is certain to revive with electronic communications, complements representative democracy, and is in no way inferior to it.

The same is true of political and economic democracy. One thinks of the preceding century or more with its war of half-truths between individualism and communism or laissez-faire liberalism and state socialism, resulting in a sort of anarchic corporatism, greedily destroying the earth's ecology.

The film critic Barry Norman chirpily called *Independence Day* "the most successful B-movie ever made." The moral of that SF story's planet plunderers is that they are a projection of our worst selves.

The author of *Permaculture*, Bill Mollison says the two world wars have been followed by a third world war on nature.

So, it is to be hoped that democrats, political and economic, representative and referential, will work together, as well as with environmentalists, and all concerned folk.

Rigid divisions between right and left seem animated by tribal loyalism rather than a desire to seek broader views. It is reasonable to suppose that direct democracy, via the internet, might transmit existing values, rather than reconcile them.

Why should people go out of their way to dispense with prejudices, merely because they are expressed thru a new medium, however revolutionary? In fact, a complaint is that old hatreds are given new life on the internet.

The point of parliament is that political values have to face each other and be argued till they make sense to others. It is true that parties in power usually try to subvert parliament by pushing thru their positions or prejudices as manifesto commitments. Rather than compromise with their critics, governments seem to take their lost votes as personal defeats.

This tacit doctrine of government infallibility discredits parliaments, full of servile partisans, and needs to be powerfully combated by the only electoral system that allows the people to transcend rigid party divisions, namely transferable voting. STV makes freedom from the party line possible for the represented, and therefore their representatives, to debate freely and fearlessly, of vested interests, to uncover the true problems and solutions for our well-being.

Using STV for referendums might also be expected to open voters eyes to the fact that there are not only black and white, either-or answers to problems, like: should Britain stay in the (iniquitous)

Common Market cum European Union or leave it? A range of options should be possible.

(Procedural note: STV can determine each options portion of support, and further ensure the options are narrowed down, by lifting the proportion of votes required, in successive primaries that elect fewer and fewer options. Surplus votes from options, passing the quota of support, are transferred to next preferred options, till the number of options, allowed at that stage, is reached.)

Settling on a representative range of options, to begin with, implies the need for a debate beforehand by a range of representatives.

The partisans, who want parliament to be a rubber stamp to party activists policies have something in common with such direct democrats, as don't believe the election of representatives is real democracy. Such people may believe they are the progressive democrats.

Triumphalist direct democrats are merely like the partisans, who want delegates rather than representatives. They want to prosecute existing opinions, whereas the genuine representative democrat wants to create a broader vision out of the clash of points of view, *considered representatively*.

That is not to say that all direct democrats are reactionary. That would be a perverse conclusion about their much valued technical innovations and aspirations. But the regressive-progressive dialog is perhaps not as straight-forward as those, who take sides, believe.

Boris Karloff in the mirror.

[To top.](#)

This confusion about the role of democracy reminds me of a Boris Karloff film where our hero, on waking, catches sight of himself in the mirror. The direct democrat sees his partisan image reflected and recoils in horror. The answer is not to smash the mirror of representation but to tolerate seeing ourselves as others see us, in parliamentary debate.

If this were not absurd enough, partisan Europe makes the converse mistake. It thinks its elections are representative, when they are mainly referential. Even when party lists are "open," the individual representation, they are supposed to offer, is ineffective. The voters are left with a corporate vote for a party that is really only a manifesto referendum vote.

Voting for a "party" is to approve its package of policies. If you could prefer a party's candidates, you could pick those whose policy positions in the party were closest to your own.

Europe has more in common, than it would like to admit, with its pre-war dictators, who used plebiscites, making popular appeals without risking any challenge to their position.

So, it would be fair to say that Europe is substantially a party list oligarchy with manifesto referendums masquerading as representative democracy.

The democratic exception has been Ireland, where the transferable vote is both representative of individual candidates and referential thru preferring candidates on cross-party or national issues. Malta also uses STV but nearly all voters obeyed the order to prefer just the candidates of their party.

Returning to Boris Karloff in the mirror, the list partisan thinks he is the mirror image representing the people's wishes. He has actually done what the purely direct democrat wishes to do. He has smashed

the mirror of representation. His own reality is too dominant for him to suffer being an image of the people. So, the reality of the peoples wishes, he is supposed to represent, is lost.

Paradox of electing an election: a referendum on PR.

[To top.](#)

In the chapter, *Foul!...*, I concluded an elected vocational second chamber would have the best authority to referee electoral system abuse. Likewise it could rule on whether proposed referendums were constitutional or just whether they made sense.

The issues promoted for referendums are controversial. That is to be expected. But it is surprising how dubious their propositions tend to be. For instance, the death penalty, giving the state a license to kill, is hardly the stuff of a Bill of Rights.

Peace.

The call for unilateral disarmament compromised the prime function of the state to defend the nation. Altho a referendum is a request for popular consent, one-sided disarmament was a sort of passive authoritarianism, determined regardless of our Warsaw Pact rivals. Neil Kinnock, the Labour leader saw the light, when Michael Gorbachev instead wanted mutual disarmament by negotiation.

Carl Sagan found that even regional nuclear war was liable to lead to a planetary life-threatening Nuclear Winter. As he said, only fools and madmen would use nuclear weapons. It should be international law that any, who did, would face trial as world war criminals for

inflicting revenge on the innocent. (The real perpetrators would be safely bunkered.)

"The bomb" should be abolished so that the possibility is removed of fools and madmen using it. Sane people know they cannot, with justice, commit mass murder and mutilation of life on earth, under any pretext of deterrence that didnt work, or "defense" that wasnt.

Perhaps the chief non-military means of forestalling militarism is global Freedom of Information, to prevent a return to the Cold War situation, where governments keep themselves in power, with Orwellian propaganda control of information, distracting from their own oppressions, by demonising other nations, as external threats, to be annihilated.

That "exotic currency" the pound.

Another proposed British referendum was to keep the pound sterling. How is foreign or British business to be prevented from following the current of currency dealings? So much for throwing the British people a shadow of sovereignty to cling to.

[Currency speculation on British entry into a European monetary union cost the country a small fortune before the government hastily withdrew.]

Election electing paradox.

At the time of writing [c 1999] a British referendum on proportional representation (sort of) was also in the offing.

[P.S.

A pretend "Independent" commission recommendation, Alternative Vote Top-up, was a botched compromise, that allowed thirteen years of Labour government to get out of its promised referendum.]

What we are talking about is actually electing an election. How do we know the right electoral method to use in a referendum to elect the right electoral method? Different methods are liable to give different results to referendums, as well as to representations. That is what started the whole fuss, in the first place.

How then are we to justify a sudden indifference to method for the referendum, that we could not for representations?

Moreover, the voting method that truly represents the voters choice of voting method may not be one and the same. If the voters realised that, they might want to change their mind to the democratic voting method.

That assumes that right method can be ascertained. And there is good reason to believe that is the case.

In other chapters, I deal with the insistence, by the Plant and Jenkins reports and others, that there is no one "right" method of election. They give up the scientific endeavor of general electoral method. So, it is hard to see why their conclusions should carry any more weight than the next persons, much less decide the terms of a national referendum between voting systems.

If different electoral methods are suited for different institutions, how are we to know which method to use for the circumstance of a referendum? Shouldnt different nations also have "indigenous" referential elections?

If not, why not? After all, representatives stand for issues that may be referred to the public. If a simple either-or choice is not good enough for representations, it is not good enough for referendums.

A straight choice between first past the post and an additional member system, such as the Jenkins reports, affirms a new version of the two party system, that was supposed to be such an "unfair"

duopoly. For, it asks the voters to choose between two systems, either biased towards the one-party right or a combined two-party centre-left.

A first past the post referendum is hardly a credible way to defeat first past the post. Whereas the Jenkins report asked Britain to walk with a right limp, instead of a left.

Democracy has nothing to do with it.

Referendums in relation to a Bill of Rights.

[To top.](#)

Suppose, then, the people choose a majoritarian voting system. If a Bill of Rights protects substantial minorities, then a majoritarian choice of system could be over-ruled. More likely, minority leaders would have applied to the constitutional court to get the terms of the referendum disqualified, in the first place.

Suppose that the people choose a voting system of proportional partisanship. Those same minority leaders know they will be elected under a party list system or party list system, combined with the single seat majorities system. They have no complaints.

Then it all depends whether critics saw to it that the writers of the Constitution had the presence of mind to state the obvious, that the public interest of the nation should prevail against sectional interests, that individuals should not be at the mercy of. This might be taken as the definition of a true community, for which a Bill of Rights is a social contract.

Then again, a voting system of proportional partisanship could be challenged constitutionally. A voting system, based on party

divisions, denies the individual freedom of choice to transcend divisions and assert the kind of community desired by the people, rather than the parties wheeling and dealing.

Such constitutional challenges could be appealed against. But the general public, who cannot be generally informed on every issue, are given more chance not to be imposed upon by specious referendums. This meets the main objection of those who believe in parliamentary, but not referential, democracy.

Also, the objection can be met, that a constitutional court, ruling on a bill of rights, does not have the democratic authority, as either representations or referendums do.

As previously suggested, the constitutional court could come from an elected second chamber of government, on a vocational franchise of the special knowledge of every occupation.

For, what we are talking about here is the limits that knowledge places on referendums as a means of democratic action. Whatever the people might want to do, there are logical and realistic limits to what can be done.

"Scientific" standards should be observed. In Britain, twice the money was spent by the pro-Common Market campaigners. Money talked twice as loud for one side. This was said not to matter. Then why not limit spending so each side has equal opportunity to air its views? This would give the result extra legitimacy, against the excuse that excess advertising swung the popular verdict. Those, for campaign spending without limit, don't appear to believe their own argument and are open to the charge of hypocrisy.

However, referendums are appropriate to the questions, that seek consent for a chosen destiny, when knowledge fails belief. The European Common Market referendums were a good example.

This discussion began by ruling out referendums as an instrument of censorship. Milton pleaded for the preserving of books, as "the precious life-blood of a master spirit." So, should referendums be suffered to decide literally life or death?

Such a referendum would be a judgment of the people on itself.

[To top.](#)

Choice Voting America?

(Proportional Representation by Single Transferable Vote: STV/PR.)

[To Table of Contents](#)

Links to sections:

(1) Turn-out and primaries:

Low turn-out from least choice.

Short history of solving basic problems in [preference voting](#).

Presidential and congressional [primaries](#) by choice voting.

A proportionally [representative executive](#).

(2) Against corporatism:

Proportional representation and [partisanship](#).

Party lists are [an irresponsible corporatism](#).

PR and holding to [democratic account](#).

Conclusion: [back to basics](#).

(1) Turn-out and primaries.

Low turn-out from least choice.

To elect means to choose-out. Only one candidate can be preferred with an x-vote or spot vote. All those candidates not preferred might as well be just one candidate, compared to the one candidate, who has more votes than any other single candidate. And this is what tends to happen. Hence, the two-party system, which is sustained by the spot votes single preference, either for party candidate A or candidate B.

There are four logical possibilities of choice between two candidates: both are equally preferred; both are equally disliked; A is preferred to B; B is preferred to A.

An election can only take place when someone is actually elected or chosen-out, and that only covers the two latter possibilities, that is half the logical possibilities. Logically, one would only expect half the electorate to vote, because the other half have no preference between only two candidates.

Indeed, in 1980 US presidential elections, 50% of the electors didn't vote. If this is apathy, it is a logical apathy. US non-voters are doing what should be logically expected of them, given their restriction to a minimum choice. In so many other American elections, turn-out drops alarmingly.

In 1998 elections of US governors, Minnesota turn-out of 60% was the highest of all 50 states. This may have had to do with the individual candidate, Jesse Ventura, whose 37% votes far exceeded that of other Reform party candidates, not exceeding 12%. Ventura won the governorship on a split vote, the Republican Norman

Coleman with 34% and the Democrat Hubert Humphrey (son of a former vice-president) on 28%.
(PRSA Quota Notes.)

(Governor Jesse Ventura runs "Conspiracy Theory," a good and watchable tv program, which is rather hit-and-miss in its news-worthiness, as one would expect.)

Prof. Douglas Amy, in *Real Choices, New Voices* cites studies that some 62% "no show" voters have least education and income, and, therefore, least cause to be content.

First past the post *initiatives and referendums* in the USA are liable to impose the will of some larger faction. This has been the case with successful initiatives to ban the teaching of evolution or "Darwinism" in schools, naturally to the annoyance of a good many American citizens!

(I've discussed this question in my chapter on referendums.)

American reformers paraphrase Bill Clinton on election-winning: "It's the economy, stupid," to: It's the electoral system, stupid. His appointee, Prof. Lani Guinier had started a debate on the subject, when that appointment was withdrawn. She remarked: "our level of participation is an embarrassment. Some may say that reflects contentment with the status quo. I think it represents...rational behavior by voters who realize their votes don't count."

Some encouragement for this view may be gleaned from the French 1981 presidential elections. Several party candidates had quite respectable levels of support but no real hope of winning. There were four serious contenders from four reasonably well-matched

main parties, in the first round of the Second Ballot system. The two more centre candidates, from the Right and the Left, went thru to the second round.

In the Second Ballot, the turn-out increased, from 80%, in the first round, to 86%. This latter figure is almost exactly the turn-out to be expected from adding up the logical possibilities of choice for four main candidates in France, instead of two main candidates, in the USA.

For two candidates, there are four logical possibilities of choice. For four candidates, there are sixteen possibilities.

(The number of logical possibilities of choice for candidates is obtained by the binomial theorem. It is two to the power of the number of candidates. In the above examples, two to the power of two equals four possibilities of choice between two candidates; and two to the power of four equals sixteen possibilities of choice between four candidates.)

Of the sixteen possibilities, two of them will be non-elective: all four candidates being equally preferred is one possibility, and all four candidates being equally disliked is another possibility. So, one would expect two-sixteenths or one-eighth of the electorate, who have no preference between the four candidates, not to vote. One eighth is twelve and a half per cent, leaving eighty-seven and a half per cent, as the number of voters. This is a good approximation to the 86% French turn-out quoted above.

The French Second Ballot seems to work, even tho it only effects a ranking of two out of four choices of candidates. In the first round, the single preference usually goes between one of two rightist or one of two leftist candidates. In the second ballot of ones vote, a single preference is enough to decide between the one remaining left or right candidate.

One could decide the election, in one round, with a so-called Supplementary Vote, giving ones second ballot choice, in a combined ballot. This is the same as having a first choice and a second choice.

For example, on the French Left, ones first choice might be a communist candidate and ones second choice the socialist. If ones communist choice lost against the socialist, in the first round of counting, then ones second choice for the socialist would help the socialist against the winning right wing candidate, in the second round.

Still, a mere double preference vote of first and second choice allows no information about ones preference between the other main two candidates, to say nothing of minor party candidates. This could encourage a rigid Left-Right divide.

It used to be joked that the French voted either for Marx or Jesus.

North American electoral reformers, including Canadians, dont seem to favor the Second Ballot, as such, for single seat elections such as of mayor or president. Rather, they speak of a more thoro version, offering more than two orders of preference. Voters are given a preference vote, to rank their order of choice for candidates.

The candidates with least first preferences are gradually eliminated till some candidate wins by achieving an over-all majority, or over half the votes. There is no need for the voters to go to the polls twice. Hence, the Americans call this "instant run-off voting" (or simply, run-off voting). In other countries, it has been known as "the alternative vote."

Short history of solving basic problems in preference voting.

[To top.](#)

The modern history of voting method perhaps begins with the French philosophers of the Enlightenment. Condorcet pointed out an apparent paradox in preference voting. Normally the winner of a preference vote of ranked choices, first, second, third etc, is decided by excluding the candidate with the least first preferences. His vote is then re-distributed according to his voters second preferences. These re-distributed votes may take some other candidate over the winning line of an over-all majority.

The Condorcet paradox shows that even the candidate with the least first preferences may be elected, if the second preference of most of the voters. This is if no candidate has an over-all majority of first preferences and if all the candidates in turn are paired against each other, with the help of re-distributed votes from the other candidates.

The Chevalier de Borda answered the Condorcet paradox by saying it did not take into account the relative importance of order of choice. So, he proposed that 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc choices should be weighted in the count. If there were four candidates, first preferences should count four times as much as fourth preferences, second preferences would count three times as much, third preferences twice as much.

It is of interest that Laplace endorsed Borda method with one of his typically involved proofs. Laplace often didnt bother to give proofs, saying a thing was too obvious. His American translator said, whenever he saw this remark, he knew he had a hard nights work ahead of him, demonstrating "the obvious." Laplace is rated among historys half-dozen greatest mathematicians.

(JFS Ross discussed Borda method in *Elections and Electors*.) It is now known that weighting the preference vote is an essential means of resolving the Condorcet paradox.

Borda method left two unresolved problems, whose solution would be provided by definitive means of weighting the preference vote in the count. Whatever mathematical series Borda method uses to weight preferences in order of importance, it is an essentially arbitrary business.

The example, given above, is the original suggestion of the arithmetic series.

Ross said this gave too much weight to lesser preferences, especially if there were many candidates. He suggested the geometric series to offset this. Others have suggested the harmonic series as a compromise. It is still guesswork.

Whichever weighting series one uses, later weightings count against earlier ones, so that the more preferences one expresses the more one is voting against ones first preference.

It wasnt till the middle of the nineteenth century that the way was made open to remedy these faults, tho it was not realised for another quarter of a century. Carl Andrae and Thomas Hare independently proposed that there should be a proportional count of preference voting. Representatives were equitably elected on each winning a required proportion of the votes in a multi-member constituency.

Some candidates would get more first preferences than they needed to achieve an elective quota of votes. The surplus votes would not be wasted but transfered to those voters second preferences. The question was: whose second preferences, amongst all the voters for the already elected candidate, would make up the transferable surplus vote?

The simplest answer was to make the surplus vote a random sample. Give the ballot box a good shake, so its contents are properly mixed or at random, like a prize draw. Then draw out a

representative sample of votes, to the number of surplus votes to be transferred.

There is a more exact way, discovered by an Australian called JB Gregory. Gregory method came to be called "the Senatorial rules," after its use in Commonwealth senates. And it gives definitive answer to out-standing problems of Borda method.

The weighting of second or lesser preferences is no longer arbitrary but in proportion to the size of the transferable surplus. Also, later preferences do not count against earlier preferences. The first preference has already been elected before the second preference comes into play to help elect another representative to a multi-member constituency.

This "single transferable vote" (STV) of surpluses is all very well till the surpluses run out. Usually, some remaining seats need to be filled by re-distributing the votes of candidates with least first preferences. This is a residual anomaly of the cruder simple majority count.

By the Meek method of STV, computers make possible a systematic flow chart of counting that further reduces any minimal possibilities for well informed voters to work the system with a contrived ordering of their preferences.

Tho not up-grading to Meek method, Cambridge, Massachusetts, local government automated their count after some six decades use of STV or "choice voting," as it's called in America. There, the term "preference voting" is another synonym for STV. But this system also uses a proportional count of preference voting. Bearing that in mind, I shall keep to the terms, choice voting or STV.

Presidential and congressional primaries by choice voting.

[To top.](#)

For reasons outlined above, the Second Ballot or successive ballots, which can be rendered compactly by preference voting, gives way, by itself, to paradox and anomaly. The proportional counting of preference votes, with the transferable voting system, resolved the main logical problems.

This system, however, involves multi-member constituencies. So, it has been claimed that STV or choice voting doesn't apply to single vacancies, like the presidency. This is too precipitous a conclusion.

STV can still determine a single vacancy by holding a series of multi-member elections, reducing the number of seats, one seat at a time, by excluding the trailing candidate.

Exclusion procedures are a main target of (social choice) critics. (Their criticisms are discussed more fully in my sequel book.) For, a candidate's exclusion is liable to be fortuitous but crucial for which preferences determine the next stage of the election.

Exclusion procedures may be more or less rough and ready applications of the relative majority principle but they are still principled. First Past the Post is the roughest and readiest version of them all, and the least acceptable.

Of course, if there are only two candidates chasing one seat, then there is no question of votes being transferred from a third candidate. The only possible preference is a first preference (whether marked on the ballot paper by a cross, a punch hole or the number one). Likewise, the only possible majority is one majority relative to the remaining minority. (e.g. 51 voters out of 100.)

It has not been appreciated that two, three, or more majorities are possible over a remaining minority (e.g. two majorities of 51 votes each, out of 150 voters; three majorities each out of 200 voters). This involves the so-called Droop quota, used to count STV.

As soon as there is more than a single majority to count, the voter needs more than a single preference. Second and third preferences help decide which candidates attract enough votes to make up second and third majorities in two or three member constituencies. One, two, three,... preferences elect one, two, three,...majorities. This is the logical correspondence of the vote to the count, which must consistently sum up degrees of individual choice to degrees of community choice.

The transferable vote translates the preference votes measure of greatness of individual choice into a measure of greatness of community choice among candidates.

Carl Andrae and Thomas Hare understood, that preference voting and proportional counting imply each other, when they independently invented this generalised electoral system. But most "modern democracies" illogically impose electoral laws that allow preference voting only in single member constituencies (the Second Ballot or Alternative Vote) or only proportional counting by party lists in multi-member constituencies.

A spot vote in a single member constituency is only the most limited choice that the transferable vote boils down to, for the final round of a contest for a single seat. STV is not a different system, it is a generalised system of "choice voting."

When someone says STV or choice voting doesnt apply to single-seat contests, all they are really saying is that only a final round of choice is allowed the public.

The American presidential election also confuses the issue. If the presidential primaries were truly comprehensive elections, then the final vote would truly be a show-down election between the two final presidential candidates, and no other candidates would be permitted to run.

Instead of that, the third candidate is decried as a "spoiler" of the popular choice of the finalists. And he is punished financially with huge campaign expenses and a lost deposit.

This is unjust, as the real blame rests with the democratic inadequacies of the primaries system.

GK Chesterton said that if a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing badly. Tho, he later was disparaging of his own "mal mot." Things usually have to be done badly before they can be done at all -- like the one megawatt of fusion power produced for the first time, in Oxford in 1991. Science, as such, tries to improve. Whereas, politics tends to be fundamentalist.

The problem with American primaries is that the voting system is too primitive for them to work properly. In the democratic spirit, some elections between candidates seeking to be their party's official nomination, were thrown open to non-party members.

Rival party members would vote for their opponents *worst* candidates. This was a version of Gresham law, that bad money drives out good: bad candidates drive out good.

You could say that sums up the whole party system of career obedience to out-moded dogmas dictated from the top. Certainly this would be true of more rigidly partisan orthodoxies than in the United States.

It would apply to British politics, for instance, even before the introduction of party list systems, whereby candidates are appointed to parliaments by the party bosses who draw up the lists -- under the

false pretence this proportional partisanship is "proportional representation."

PR was intended to promote democracy, which has been surreptitiously undermined by this debased form of it, using party lists.

That is what Prof. Hermens meant by PR as "the Trojan horse of democracy." Hermens threw out the baby with the bath water by culpably not distinguishing the original PR of choice voting, which greatly improved democratic method.

Likewise, the irony of American primaries is that they threatened to undermine democracy, in the attempt to enhance it.

The solution to both problems of democratic degradation is the same. Choice voting gives more equitable representation, than first past the post, without denying individual representation. STV gives much greater freedom of choice and, in so doing, effectively solves the primaries problem.

The primaries problem is whether primaries should be open or closed. Open primaries allow everyone to choose who will be a party's official candidate. This choice is typically abused by partisan opponents. So, parties have wished to conduct closed primaries to all but their members. This, in turn, may be challenged as less democratic.

The dilemma has caused endless wrangling, by constitutional lawyers, over the rights and wrongs of the matter.

It is actually a logical problem in electoral method, whose solution (the short history explains above) led to the transferable voting method. As Oxford professor of Constitutional Law, Vernon Bogdanor explained why STV could produce a more democratic and efficient system of American primaries.

With STV or choice voting, everyone can vote, and the candidates most preferred are elected in a congressional multi-member constituency. Say, there are five seats, then the two most preferred out of five Republicans and the two most preferred out of five Democrats might be elected.

Another one-sixth of the voters might opt for an Independent (as in Vermont) or a Green or a Reform party candidate. (This would leave less than a sixth of the voters unrepresented here, for a proportional representation of five-sixth the voters.)

With choice voting, primaries are built into the general election itself, because the most preferred of the party candidates are elected in a multi-member constituency. This is done by *all* the voters. And even open primaries cannot expect the turn-out of a general election.

Prof. Hugh Bone, studying New York use of choice voting, observed:

"Some of the most able councilmen were non-organization Democrats and Republicans...who undoubtedly would never have won the primary in a single member district because of opposition from the district machine."

Moreover, the parties can still hold primaries, private to their own members, that is closed primaries, that no longer need be contested, in the constitutional courts, as extremist or factional "conspiracies" against the public will.

This is especially the case because all parties need to field a good spread of candidates, rather than a narrow segment of opinion, to pick up as many seats as possible in a multi-member constituency. The quality of the candidates is essential, also, as personal preference is decisive, with choice voting.

The same sort of reasoning applies to presidential primaries. Each party could put up to, say, five candidates, in a given state.

Independents could stand, too, without being discriminated against by a party list system.

(List counting allows votes for one party candidate to go to another on the same list, in a proportional count, without the voters consent, which gives an unfair advantage against Independent candidates not belonging a list. Advocates of party lists, as "fair," only mean between parties and uncritical partisans, not the rest of us.)

At any rate, the last but one stage of a presidential election would probably be fought as a two-member election (like the Senate two member constituencies). All but two of the presidential hopefuls, getting over one third the votes each, would be left in the running. The final vote would be a straight fight for over half the votes. This would avoid the undemocratic effect of a candidate winning due to a spoiler splitting the vote of a candidate, who is more preferred to the (official) winner.

(Also, this would avoid run-off voting, with its re-distribution of preferences from arbitrarily excluded candidates.)

In a comic thriller, two ex-presidents, played by Jack Lemmon, as a Republican, and James Garner, as a Democrat, end-up by standing for re-election on a "united" Republican-Democrat ticket. The film ends with them privately squabbling over precedence, as they start their joint campaign.

Choice voting could allow the public settle the squabble. Imagine, again, the choice voting presidential primaries have reached the last stage but one. There may be the two leading Democrats and the two leading Republicans still in the running, and, say, an Independent, like John Anderson, or a Green, like Ralph Nader.

We supposed these five contending for two remaining places. The two most preferred candidates are likely to be a Republican and a

Democrat. But assume now that America is in a period of national emergency, in which there is a strong feeling for political unity. Then, the Democratic and Republican parties could agree that whichever of their candidates wins the final round, the straight fight, becomes president, and the other party's candidate becomes vice-president.

A proportionally representative executive.

[To top.](#)

In recent years, since writing this chapter, I've come to think that the presidency is too monarchic an institution. Granted, as Obama said, he is not a dictator, he is just the president.

I think that the executive needs a president who is more "a first among equals."

The argument for a single out-right leader is that, especially in times of emergency, the country needs a leader to take decisive action, not hampered by others agonising over the right course to take.

In that respect, the president is commander of the armed forces. Hail to the chief!

To say the least, this has not been an unmixed blessing. A tv program, on the origin of the Vietnam war, (which I believe was narrated by the actor, Martin Sheen) came to the conclusion that it came about on a presidential pretext.

This included evidence of the White House tapes and a naval witness that the Vietnamese had not attacked a US warship in the gulf. It was claimed that had Congress known the reality of the situation, they would not have authorised military action against Vietnam.

This was no small matter, in view of the escalation of the conflict, in which millions of people died, especially from the blitz of bombing exceeding that in the whole of world war two.

The program claimed that the American government knew that, in peaceful elections, South Vietnam would vote for the North Vietnamese communist regime.

This in itself suggests that US presidential power was, or is, too over-weening.

Nor was this an isolated incident. Much the same problem arose with the second Iraq war. President Bush junior apparently wanted to finish the job of his father as president during the first Iraq war. Then, Iraqis were urged to rise up against iron rule by Saddam Hussein, without giving them the support they needed for such an up-rising to succeed.

Maybe the son president wanted to make-up for a family short-coming. An executive committee, not made up of relatives, or indeed appointed cronies, of the president, but representing center and corners of the American republic, would have had a less personal view, and more objective view, of the nations and the worlds needs.

The entirely uncritical support, of the media, massaged public opinion to make this possible, unwisely disregarding the advice of President Chirac, that "wars are never easy."

An exception was the books of Michael Moore and his documentary, Fahrenheit 9/11. It was a fair crack at infamous vested interests, surrounding the second Gulf war. Likewise, the public radio broadcaster Amy Goodman, with David Goodman: The Exception To The Rulers. (Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers and the Media That Love Them.)

The USA needs to bring back the Fairness doctrine abolished by President Reagan. The Fairness doctrine would have prevented the pro-war propaganda blitz on the American people.

The president should not have this kind of monarchic power, to do away with such a vital safeguard for a civilised constitution, based on decisions made in the light of impartial evidence.

That is to say again the president should be only the first among equals in an executive committee.

Americans were encouraged to blame France. Had French and other European counsel prevailed, an internationally legal agreement, thru the United Nations, might have resolved Saddam Hussein to seek exile, with his ill-gotten gains, in Libya. That would have been a price well-worth paying to save hundreds of thousands of lives and avert the subsequent chaos and misery for millions of people in the Middle East.

Also, it is noticable, that in a war emergency, the first thing, the leader does, is to appoint a five-person war cabinet.

What is actually needed, for all the emergencies and incidentals of government, is a democratically instituted executive committee, with the president presiding as chairman with a casting vote in an uneven numbered supreme body, say, of five members, drawn proportionly from the whole of the United States.

A minimal five could be the heads of the great departments of state. The executive might also comprise an elected grand committee of all the departments of state or all the organs of government.

America might profitably follow Switzerland with a proportionly elected executive, as well as a proportionly elected legislature.

The Swiss electoral system is about as liberal as European party list systems can be. You can even vote for more than one party by

cumulative vote.

Never the less, several X-votes count against each other, when used for different candidates, and can only convey a hazy idea of voters preferences. Switzerland is still limited by the crudeness of spot voting.

Besides the proportional count requirement, a systematic preference vote, of first, second, third, etc choices, over a whole range of candidates, establishes the democratic order that candidates are to be elected, til all the seats are filled, in a multi-member constituency.

A pan-American five-person executive with the president, first among equals, might be a better system than a one-man supremo, say, from Illinois, backed by campaign funds, including that states nuclear industry, that subsequently gets an over-generous government subsidy for more nuclear power stations that freely would not have been built.

They also tend to be sited in the most deprived states, like Georgia, less able to defend themselves from that imposition on its citizens. Tho, "nuclear power, the economics say: No," according to one financial institution report.

In that rarity, a modern classic, *The Best Democracy That Money Can Buy*, Greg Palast investigated safety standards in the nuclear industry.

He studied the eroding of universal suffrage thru doctoring the electoral roll, in ways that put a partisan skew on the results, especially against typicly Democrat African-Americans, in the controversial presidential election of 2000.

The missing ballots controversy was the subject of a watchable but diplomatically bi-partisan movie.

However, I don't hesitate to point out the moral, that democracy

degrades (second law of thermo-dynamics fashion) without commitment to improvement. especially of voting method.

(2) Against corporatism.

Proportional representation and partisanship.

[To top.](#)

Choice voting would much more efficiently effect primaries, and thereby has a potential for increasing voter turn-out. These considerations are of especial prominence in the American system. Choice voting has other democratic functions of comparable importance.

The achievement of proportional representation between the parties has already been touched on. There is no doubt that simple majority elections constrain the voters into a two-party system. For instance, Irish and Prothro admit this in their textbook on American democracy. To the other parties struggling to get a foot-hold in the system, this is all-important. The small party mentality is responsible for much of the exaggerated claims for electoral systems with a proportional count for political parties.

"Proportional representation" means the election of representatives on a proportion of the votes. Each representative, in a multi-member constituency, is elected on the same number of votes, which is an elective proportion or quota of the total constituency votes. Thus, equal representation is ensured by the proportional count.

This system requires a preference vote, so the voters can elect the candidates, to the winning proportions of votes, in order of choice: 1, 2, 3,...etc on the ballot paper. If your first preference has more votes than needed to achieve her quota, the extra or surplus votes are transferable to second or next choices of candidate. That way, a range of the most popular candidates are elected.

This method is called the single transferable vote; "choice voting" in the USA and the Hare-Clark or quota-preferential system in Australia. STV was called the Hare system after Thomas Hare, who thought of it in the mid 19th century -- independently of Carl Andrae, a few months before. This is the original and literal form of PR.

However, when most people speak of proportional representation or PR, they are really talking about the parties getting their "fair" share of parliamentary seats for votes. Systems, that work on this basis, give an X-vote for a "party list." Then the parties get seats in proportion to their respective totals of party votes.

The snag is -- as Enid Lakeman (*How Democracies Vote*) pointed out -- that your X or spot vote, for an individual candidate on a party list, may count towards the election of some candidate on that list, that you didnt vote for.

Altho such systems are still called proportional representation, they are really based on a principle of proportional partisanship. It is a popular fallacy to confuse the two. The former implies the latter but the latter does not imply the former.

These partisan systems have been around in Europe, more or less since the turn of the 1900s. This doesnt stop some electoral reformers describing them as "modern" or allow them to worry that their contribution to European history may leave something to be desired.

All is forgotten in the desire to remove "first past the post," except when used in combination with list systems, when simple majorities suddenly and mysteriously become alright again. As long as the smaller parties are served, nothing else seems to matter to such reformers.

In recent years, party lists have spread further, notably when used in combination with the traditional "first past the post," as "additional (list) member systems" (AMS). Usually, this involves two X-votes, one for a single member and one for a party list.

First past the post, as of an election "race," means that the candidate, with more votes than any other, is elected. This usually takes place in single member constituencies, when it is also called a "winner takes all" system, because the candidate with this "simple majority" may have a quite small fraction of the constituency vote; much less than an over-all majority of votes, that would show a clear winner. Yet the rep. of the largest faction monopolises the constituency, only having a single seat.

In July 1997, the Center for Voting and Democracy predicted the winners in 83% of the November 1998 U.S. House races. One party held the balance of power in most districts. Its candidate can be bought or "sponsored" by special interests.

Michael Moore asked why we bother with the party representatives, instead of dealing direct with their big business backers.

The Center said Americas "no-choice" elections must have a demoralising effect on turn-out:

"Legislators are already sharpening their knives to carve up the electorate into a new round of safe districts in the redistricting of 2001."

The Centers 1997 prediction was less than twenty years after the National Campaign for Fair Votes made a similar close guess of the results of a British general election. That, by the way, appears to be the inspiration of the "Fair Votes" campaigns in both Canada and the USA.

North Americans, please note that it once seemed inconceivable that "the British system" would ever change. But 2000 saw the British mainland with half a dozen different systems, proportional, as well as majoritarian, and all of them bad.

(This statement only needed slightly qualifying by 2007, when STV was introduced for Scottish local elections, tho in not highly proportional three or four member constituencies. One has to be thankful for small mercies.)

I believe that list counting proportional systems are not democratically acceptable. The fact that they are widespread does not make them right. Many abuses are widespread and party lists are an abuse of individual liberty. List systems are where I disagree with all those "Fair Votes" campaigners, who believe implicitly that fairness need mean only fairness between parties -- fairness only within the self-appointed political class.

Party list systems, "fairly" speaking, also, should be called "no-choice" elections, in that their vote, for a party, over-rides individual representation. To partisans, especially small partisans, that doesnt matter, so long as parties get *their* "fair" share of seats for votes to *their* candidates.

Take the contradiction inherent in the much-advocated Additional Member System (AMS), which North Americans call Mixed Member Proportional (MMP). Proportional representation, properly speaking, is about power-sharing but the single member system is about

monopolising power. The contradiction, of a vote for each, hints at further inconsistencies in the system (explained, for instance, in my next books chapter, HOW NOT TO DO IT -- a phrase, shouted in capitals, in the reforming novel *Little Dorrit* by Charles Dickens).

The "doublespeak" of double Vote MMP is not logical, or even just, but power has its own logic and rough justice, and this cynical business is what you may see much of, in the struggle for and against certain types of electoral reform.

Party lists are an irresponsible corporatism.

[To top.](#)

New parties, such as the Greens and the Reform party, have arisen in America, because they feel the two main parties are not properly dealing with vital issues. I happen to believe they are right. In their frustration with the system, they are liable to believe that the ends justify the means. Party list "PR" would certainly get small parties a place in government. But it would do so at too heavy a price.

For one thing, the lists would be filled by the activists you might not want to represent you. You might be Green but prefer some other candidates -- or some other order -- than the party slate offers. Choice voting means your vote goes to candidates in the order of your choice.

As the Accurate Democracy web-site says:

"A great advantage of STV is that it needs no parties. That means it can be used by organizations which haven't any, such as unions, clubs, and schools. Many British and Australian Universities use

STV. U.S. colleges with STV include: Harvard, MIT, Oberlin, Princeton, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, Vassar, and Whitman."

Party lists are ordered by the organisation man or boss, the sole holder of any preference voting, for which there is no "universal suffrage." In Europe, and no doubt North America and elsewhere, there are already small party activists who have sold their souls to oligarchy by lists, so they may come to power by proportional partisanship.

Nor need we be surprised at this. Nineteenth century socialism was supposed to herald a New Jerusalem, by replacing the plutocrat with the bureaucrat. The world has still not recovered from the grotesque tragedy and criminal folly of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" and state socialism.

The socialists have left a power vacuum to be filled by greedy exploitation.

Revisionists recognised political democracy, but even they opted for economic bureaucracy. Consequently, economic democracy has struggled to be an issue at all.

(This subject includes "Constitutional Economics" and an economic parliament -- or occupational congress -- for "equality of lobbying.")

Now the Greens are stepping in, not only to safeguard society but nature. And like the socialists, before them, some (not all) have chosen bad means to good ends. The support of undemocratic reforms, like party list systems, or their hybrids, can be guaranteed to have unfortunate consequences.

Much of the blame for degradation of the eco-system goes to the inequitable nature of corporate law, that treats a company as an "individual," so that no individual directors are held responsible for profitable vandalism. This may be Capitalisms worst corruption.

Yet, party lists are a form of political corporatism, in which the people are expected to vote for a "party," as if it were an individual. The same irresponsibility is being fostered in politics as in economics. In logic, this is the fallacy of confusing a member with its class.

Moreover, party lists make political ghettos of an issue, such as the environment. The false implication of the list system is that only the Green party is green, only the Reform party reformist, and so on. This may encourage ruling politicians to regard green politics or reform as a marginal issue.

It is not hard to guess that Green partisans may be seduced by the dream that they shall sweep all before them, electorally, and rapidly become the governing party. This is a gamble and the Greens are supposed to be against gambling with the future of life on this planet. By 2000, the worlds governments were unwilling to take even minor preventive action against global warming.

And there is a much better way, that could be so easily implemented. Choice voting would allow voters to prefer the most environmentally-friendly candidates from all parties, if they so wished. The issue neednt be marginalised, by just having an X-vote to vote for a Green party list. That might not suit some green activists, but certainly, it would be a way for public interest issues in general to permeate representative bodies.

PR and holding to democratic account.

[To top.](#)

The separation of powers in the US constitution shifts the emphasis on which features of choice voting are most important for its

democracy, but does not lessen that importance. In countries ruled by parliamentary cabinet governments, the little understood value of STV is that it can pick out a particular *coalition*, preferred by a majority of voters, if one party falls short thereof.

Choice voting allows one to extend one's preferences from candidates of one's most preferred party to those of one's next preferred party. The combination preferred by a majority of voters will have the majority of seats in parliament to form a government.

In America, the president forms the government, so STV is *less* needed in its role of forming the democratic choice of coalition. On the other hand, we have seen that the American system needs choice voting for *more* effective primaries.

STV works, for unity in diversity, both with parliamentary coalition-forming and presidential primaries or primacy-forming.

State or federal congresses need choice voting to ensure that the group composition of their majorities are made up the way the majority of Americans prefer. They may be legislatures, rather than executives. But the president or state governor still depends on a friendly majority to see thru his legislation. It may not matter too much, for the American system, if he does not have that friendly majority. What matters is that the majority, friendly or unfriendly, should be representative of the voters.

The unrepresentative nature of first past the post is as evident in the USA as other countries.

For example, it turned Ulster into a one-party state governed by the Unionists for over fifty years. Eventually, the Northern Irish Catholics emulated the peaceful civil rights movement, in the USA, and went on the march. This was not tolerated and a sort of drawn-out civil war followed, in which crimes against humanity were committed, by various factions, including against their own communities.

Likewise, the USA found itself with "the one-party south" after the civil war. The continued oppression of the Afro-American might have been mitigated by a proportionate voice in government, there.

First past the post fails democracy when it fails to adequately represent minorities, because effective democracy depends on a strong opposition to keep the ruling group in line. First past the post gives the biggest party a monopoly of representation, so they can do what they like, without parliamentary criticism, to give authoritative challenge.

The single member system is also prone to *gerrymandering*, the drawing of constituency boundaries to include a safe majority of a given candidates supporters, so that the result of the election is effectively decided before it's held.

Whether the boundaries are drawn with fraudulent intent or not, single member constituencies are monopolistic. And the calculating side of human nature is bound to challenge the process on the grounds that an "unfair" fraction of some candidates natural constituency may be left out of bounds to his candidacy.

At any rate, single-member boundary-drawing is especially contentious. But the two interested parties have the motive to carve up the country between them, so they each have their "fair share" of safe seats, whose bounds are a sort of lasso round the representatives majorities and unwilling minorities, in every constituency.

A study by the League of Women Voters (Seattle) says that gerrymandering is widespread, mentioning two kinds: *fragmenting* splits up residential blocs of support for the rival party into different districts; the *sweet-heart* gerrymander is an agreement between the two parties to have the boundaries drawn so they each get safe seats.

Academics held televised interviews with the presidents, when Ronald Reagan held the office. One of their questions was what most needed to be done about the American system. Jimmy Carter concentrated on campaign finance reform of the scandal of expecting rewards for business donations to parties.

Ford and Reagan both condemned gerrymandering. Gerald Ford mused that he knew how it all worked, from his times in smoke-filled rooms. He said there should be competition in elections. Congress has become an incumbents House and that is not healthy for a democracy.

A joker about Ford (not a president, an accident, etc), met him many years later, and was ashamed to have ridiculed such a sweet man.

"Affirmative gerrymandering" was an attempt to make the system work for minorities, such as the blacks. Enid Lakeman called it an exercise in futility. The idea was to make this inequitable or unfair system work unfairly to the advantage of the unfairly unrepresented minorities!

The blacks rarely have a majority in any constituency, but salamander-like boundaries could be drawn to artificially include a black majority.

Later, the Supreme Court decided gerrymandering, affirmative or otherwise, was unconstitutional, with regard to a black Congress-womans constituency. To which, coming from the citrus state of Georgia, Cynthia McKinney made the memorable reply: Today, they have given us lemons, but we shall turn them into lemonade.

The realisation is spreading in America that first past the post cannot deliver equality, and counter-acting inequality is no remedy. Proportional representation seems all set to be a plank in the platform to make racial equality a reality, as well as a campaign

objective for organisations like The Alliance for Democracy, co-operating with The Center for Voting and Democracy.

Douglas J Amy said of local government:

"Proportional representation also encouraged fairer racial and ethnic representation. It produced the first Irish Catholics elected in Ashtabula, and the first Polish-Americans elected in Toledo. In Cincinnati, Hamilton, and Toledo, African-Americans had never been able to win city office until the coming of PR. Significantly, after these cities abandoned PR, African-Americans again found it almost impossible to get elected."

Perhaps the most notorious example was in New York, controlled by Tammany Hall, which became a by-word for corruption. Less remarked are its antics, afterwards, to suppress proportional representation.

Tammany Hall held three referendums, in a row, before it could rid New York local elections of PR, even with the big money and publicity on its side.

Needless to say, there was no attempt here to inform public opinion or respect the public will, only to impose on the public, to get the electoral law changed in Tammanys own office-holding interest.

Bringing back first past the post effectively abolished the opposition and all criticism. The Tammany Democrats had a free hand to do what they did: mismanage, misappropriate and bankrupt the city, which they then handed over to big business.

Cincinnati was also regarded as one of the most corrupt local governments. After PR was introduced, the city was judged by Forbes magazine to be the best run in America.

According to Amy: "In Cincinnati, the number of effective votes... [rose] from an average of 56.2% in the three pre-PR elections to an

average of 90% for the 16 PR elections. Similar effects were found in other PR cities."

A Cincinnati referendum to re-introduce PR was lost by 45% to 55%.

Cambridge is the great success story of choice voting PR in local government. This is the home of the famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

(MIT announced, after the 2000 Presidential election controversy, it was taking part in the preparation of a new standard of balloting technology.)

It stretches credibility that if choice voting was not an especially good system, that those critical minds would not have rejected it.

The League of Women Voters have been studying alternative voting methods. The Pasadena chapter referred to a guest columnist. David Sullivan had much experience of PR in Cambridge:

"Cambridge is a diverse city of about 100,000 residents, including many ordinary working families as well as the university population... It is a melting pot of many races and cultures (literally dozens of languages are spoken at our high school), including a large African-American population."

"The genius of PR is that it successfully represents all these varying interests on our local governing bodies in proportion to their strength in the electorate. For example, our six-member school board (the Mayor casts the seventh vote) now consists of four women, including two African-Americans and a Latina who is a union organizer, and two white men from the more traditional Italian- and Irish-American neighborhoods."

"Without PR, I am sure that much of this diversity would be lost from our elected bodies. Yet, these different individuals work remarkably

well together, and in my opinion have served as a force for civic unity among the interests they represent. For example, last year our School Board hired a new superintendent with very little rancor or divisiveness. In general, that has been our experience with PR over the years, so that no one now seriously proposes to change or get rid of it."

Hopefully, Cambridge choice voting will be the model for electoral change in America. Choice voting or the single transferable vote is a general theory of choice, which uniquely applies to elections in general, political or non-political, representative or referential.

Reprehensively, the government of Massachusetts banned choice voting from the rest of the state. Winner-takes-all incumbents are desperate to quarantine intelligent co-operation from American politics.

Conclusion: back to basics.

[To top.](#)

The democratic world, such as it is, is in a hopeless mess of conflicting and varying voting systems, because the first principles of electoral logic are scarcely understood. As JFS Ross said, in *Elections and Electors*, an election consists of a vote and a count. The vote is for the individual, the count is its aggregation to a community decision. For this to be achieved, the magnitude of choice must carry over from vote to count.

With a spot vote, the voter can only express a greater choice for one candidate over another. And this can only consistently carry over, in the count, as a greater choice, or majority, of the community for one candidate over another.

Choice voting or STV is the system that consistently generalises greatness of choice, from this special case, in both the vote and the count. That means that a spot vote, for one candidate over another, is generalised to a preference vote, that gives ranked choice of candidates, for a generalised count, by way of relative majorities, in a multi-member constituency. (The Droop quota count, used with STV, is simply a rationalisation of an over-all majority count.)

Choice voting is the consistent logic of electoral choice.

Failure, to realise this, is why the world is awash with obsolete or half-witted voting systems. Some rely on first past the post, no longer remotely adequate for a choice of more than two candidates. Some rely on exhaustive ballots or preference votes without a proportional count, and vice versa. Tho, relative greatness of choice in a preference vote is meant to translate into relatively great majorities, in a proportional count.

An electoral system that uses a preference vote, not proportionally counted, is like a question without a rational answer. And a system that uses a proportional count without establishing voters order of choice, in a preference vote, is like an answer that begs the question.

In the latter case, the parties have already dogmatised that the voters are all obedient partisans voting for a party. And the question who shall be the voters individual representatives is decided by the preference vote ballot papers, exclusive to a few party bosses and called party lists.

Everyone may have a vote, but universal suffrage is far from being achieved, if preference voting is exclusive to party bosses and proportional counting exclusively for party lists: one social groups oligarchic control of the count, for their leaders choice of individual political officials.

Universal suffrage is preferential suffrage for the individual and proportional suffrage for the community.

[To top.](#)

Power in the European Union and English regions

[To Table of Contents](#)

Section links:

English assemblies also given an undemocratic voting system.

[Proper elections, please.](#)

David Steel: [Edinburgh lecture.](#)

[European Union](#) will fail without individual freedom of consent.

English assemblies also given an undemocratic voting system.

In mid 2003, the deputy prime minister John Prescott announced that three English regions would be given a referendum on whether they wanted their own assemblies. These regions are the North-west, the North-east, and the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

These three regions are the furthest from central government in the south and the closest to Scotland, which has already voted in a referendum for its own assembly. Wales also voted for its assembly and it could be argued that its Keltic neighbor, Cornwall, in south-west England should have been up for an assembly, too. After all, Cornwall once did have its own parliament.

In march 2002, a BBC poll interviewed 2646 people. Almost two-thirds wanted regional government. The highest support, 73%, was in the West Midlands. Least support came from the regions nearest London.

As usual, the opponents to regional assemblies have roused real fears that three layers of taxes will be needed to pay for regional, as well as local and national government. At any rate, the county councils would be replaced by one regional council or assembly. Up till now, central government has always feared that regional governments would be too big a challenge to its authority.

This may be doubted from Canadas example. The federal government is dominated by the two most populous states of Quebec and Ontario. The western states are said to feel that they are "consulted and ignored." The western-most, British Columbia has embarked on a new treaty between governing and governed, with a Citizens Assembly and popular referendum to decide the best electoral system.

On the other hand, local government has feared that a regional administration would favor the main population centre, where it was situated. Thus, the most rural of English counties North Yorkshire fears its interests would be subordinated to the urban concentrations of West Yorkshire. Precisely this effect worked against the first attempt in modern times to re-introduce a Scottish assembly. In the referendum in the 1970s, the dense Clydeside region was heavily in favor but rural regions tended to be against.

In the 1990s, Labour gave up the idea of ruling Scotland as a one-party state, thru the first past the post system, giving them a majority of seats without needing a majority of Scottish votes. The government allowed so-called proportional representation by a method of their own choosing, the additional member system (AMS).

The government has also imposed this system for English assemblies.

In 2003, the public was invited to e-mail about the White Paper on

Regional Governance.
My subject was:

Proper elections, please.

[To top](#)

Thankyou for asking for our views.

The English regional assemblies option is spoiled by imposing an undemocratic voting system, AMS. This is not an electoral system worthy of the name but a safe seats system of monopolistic single members and oligarchic lists. It promotes place-holders subservient to its party appointers.

This will not make politicians less disliked. It will not promote the free enquiry and representative participation needed for the knowledge and learning upon which human progress depends.

I believe that the Kerley report offers a new deal between rulers and ruled, which should be applied to other levels of government. Namely, politicians are given qualification opportunities in office, so that they can do their job better and have an employment resource, if not re-elected. Equally, the elections should be genuinely elective, so it is worth voting. STV achieves this, and was recommended by the Kerley report and the Kilbrandon report.

My views on the scientific method of elections are to be found on my Democracy Science website.

Yours sincerely...

The official web site promised a reply, which was not forthcoming till prompted. Where-upon, I was told that AMS would be the system used. My answer follows, referring to a few points made by the government spokesman on the web:

Thankyou for your reply.

It exemplifies the problem with politics.

The government asks for our opinion, only to tell us what we are going to get. A White Paper is supposed to be a consultation document. An election is supposed to offer a choice.

The party lists system and party lists additional member system is already in use, because the government has set its own "precedent" in imposing them on our country. When the public were listened to, as by the Kerley committee and the Sunderland committee, they preferred the system giving an effective choice between the candidates, namely STV. This was despite AMS use in Scotland and Wales.

Party list systems and their hybrids only "include" all-or-nothing partisans, people who are prepared to unquestioningly follow a party line, whatever the party -- maybe five per cent of the population?

Party lists offer no personal choice of candidate. They are completely unrepresentative of anything but support for one party dogma rather than another even less liked.

And the single members are retained because they corral constituents into monopolies on representation of the most restricted sort.

Voters are more likely to "identify" a representative, from among multi-member choice, they can identify with.

AMS politicians in their safe seats are "encouraged" only to be party servants superseding regional civil servants. A regional expansion in party bureaucracies is all this exercise in regional assemblies is about.

The governments last point about different models for different circumstances is from the Plant report -- I criticised at the time. The reports claim, that the rules of choice should be whatever the politicians choose to say they are, is completely wrong: scientifically nonsense. The logic of choice doesnt change for electing different bodies.

Peter Mandelson admitted as much, despite himself, in the Lords reform debate (referred to in my open letter to the Lords reform committee). He said, how long do you think it would take to become completely obvious to everyone that the two chambers on different electoral systems was completely untenable?

Yours sincerely,..

[P.S. All three referendums decisively rejected the assemblies. Simon Jenkins reported that Prescott simply appointed the regional bodies en masse.

That is not so very different from the Additional Member System which is pretty well an electorally cosmetic system of appointments.]

David Steel: Edinburgh lecture.

[To top](#)

This page has been up-dated to refer to David Steel giving the National Library of Scotland Donald Dewar lecture, held at the Edinburgh Book Festival. The main theme was expenses and taxes. And there were several far-reaching recommendations for Scottish government.

Of concern here, in relation to proposed English Assemblies, is that Steel renewed a call to replace the Additional Member System, which has not been a success, with the Single Transferable Vote for the Scottish Parliament.

59 additional members, to 73 single member constituency MSPs, are elected from top-up regional lists, "by less than truly democratic means" of the parties own selection procedures. Lists create "an unacceptable democratic deficit" in leaving the choice of those

eventually elected to small groups of party activists. This led to tension with the constituency MSPs and "a confusing and expensive proliferation of parliamentary offices."

The decision to give publicly funded local offices to list MSPs, as well as constituency MSPs, had led to "a thinly disguised subsidy from the taxpayer for the local party machines."

"In my view they are a serious waste of public money -- and I do not exclude my own former regional office from that stricture."

Steel regards the additional member system as "an expensive mistake." He advocates the single transferable vote, as in Ireland. Citizens could have (proportional) representation in a constituency and a choice of three or four MSPs to look after them.

David Steel, the former Liberal leader was at the heart of the British all-party campaign for Fair Votes that has been taken-up in other English-speaking countries. This campaign always held that the main thing was that elections be proportional, never mind the method.

Experience, of a list system of additional members, has taught him otherwise.

During his leadership, changing the first past the post system ceased to be a tabu subject. And the two big parties, instead of the little Liberal party, looked increasingly isolated. Steel, always courteous and collected, had much to do with the informal re-alignment, as well as the alliance and eventual merger with Labours break-away Social Democrats.

Moreover, Steel was in the chair for the constitutional convention for a Scottish Parliament. This substituted the additional member system for the single transferable vote, recommended by the Kilbrandon report. The Labour government, in the nineteen seventies, simply ignored its own royal commission. Eventually, Scottish Labour came round to accepting the proportional method of undemocratically elected additional members from party lists.

Before retiring, Sir David was the presiding officer of the Scottish parliament. In short, he was just about as widely respected as it is possible for a politician to be. His has been the conventional wisdom of an electoral reform movement of fair votes that has spread round the English-speaking world. And yet experience of the Scottish parliament has taught him the difference between the good and the bad proportional system.

What a caution for English assemblies, for British Columbia reform deliberations and those of other Canadian states fast following the route to electoral reform.

European Union will fail without individual freedom of consent.

[To top](#)

H G Wells recognised that science and technology put previously separate peoples much more easily within reach. Not only nation states but federations and ultimately a world state would be technically practical. Against these greater unities, the freedom of the individual had to be re-asserted. Near the end of his life, after the fashion of Tom Paine, he started a charter of human rights, which would become the Sankey declaration.

Wells also recognised the insular prejudices of the old local communities against each other, because they had little to do with each other. (He discusses this as early as his 1908 novel *The War In The Air*.) This insularity was not least true of Britain, which is after all insular as only islands can be.

Perhaps, insularity is not all bad. Insularity has offered Britain a certain freedom from the worst of the turmoils of Europe. To prevent the dominant European power of the day extending its power over its

shores, England or Britain has been "the counter-weight of Europe" tending to ally with the secondary powers on the Continent.

British politicians are divided between those who do or do not want closer political and economic integration with Europe. For convenience, they are called the pro-Europeans and anti-Europeans. This crude labeling does not do justice to the issue. The latter were stigmatised as "little Englanders."

A pro-European, like Tony Blair, betrays a certain impatience with those who cannot see that the British pound is as obsolete as some local currency of one of the thirteen English colonies in America. Greater technological power is relentlessly integrating the world. To pretend otherwise is to try to hide in a back-water.

On the issue of whether Britain should in principle join the single European currency, the Euro, the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, was reduced to ridiculing nationalist prejudice against it. For himself and the prime minister Tony Blair, joining is a technical question of meeting the right economic conditions, as he so construes.

A referendum first ratified Britains just joining "the Common Market." It is now known that the government was not frank with the British people. European partners were thinking all along in terms of a "United States of Europe." Tony Blair had to get that expression deleted from the 2003 draft of the European Constitution.

The real issue of Britain or any country in Europe is whether the conditions of individual freedom are being met with this greater political and economic organisation of mankind. Any greater union, whether of a nation, continent or whole planet, requires a corresponding greater power of consent granted to its individual members. Politicians are typically blind to the greater responsibility that goes with greater power.

The new EU Constitution plans to intimately affect peoples lives: "everything from pensions to passports and law and order to union power." But the convention on the future of a European union of 25

member states does not vest power with the people. A president would be elected for at least two and a half years. He could only be a serving or former leader of one of the member states. And he could only be elected by member states leaders. That is comparable to the United States president only being elected by state governors. Some "United States of Europe" -- with a president elected on a "universal suffrage" of 25 people!

A European foreign minister would be "elected" in such-like manner. With this under-whelming privilege comes the requirement:

"Member states shall actively and unreservedly support the union's common foreign and security policy in a spirit of loyalty."

This is a statement of intent worthy of party politicians rather than world statesmen. It would be like putting Europe in the hands of a party boss. All regional, national and global ties and obligations would be subordinated to a so-called "European" party line. It is a top dogmatists fantasy.

The former Gaullist and French president Valery Giscard d'Estaing chaired the convention. Charles de Gaulle said of him: "One day he will betray me... I hope he does it well."

This gallicism betrays the folly of trusting in blind obedience.

On 25 november 2000, *The Daily Mail* reported the European Commissions annual single market score-board showed that the nations most keen on integration failed most to implement and to obey Brussels 1,459 directives.

The prime architect of European union, France received most disobedience warnings (89) followed by Italy (72). Germany had 66. Britain the "black sheep" of Europe received only 34. And Denmark, which actually voted against the single currency, had only 16 "tickings off."

The president of the European Commission, Romani Prodi said the draft constitution was in some ways a step back from avoiding bureaucratic gridlock. He also was unwilling to follow the route of

blind obedience: "We cannot let ourselves become victims or hostages of a text...that threatens to paralyse Europe..." He was disappointed at its lack of vision and ambition.

To anti-corporatists, a sinister decision of the convention was that the European Union should have a "legal personality." That is like making a political "body" called Europe responsible for things that go wrong instead of its leaders being personally accountable for their actions. The same legal status of business corporations has allowed them to plunder the planet with impunity.

The Italian premier Berlusconi, becoming acting EU president, conveniently illustrates the situation. He controls much of his country's economy and media. A tv presenter, who no longer has that job, dared to criticise him. He was interrupted by Berlusconi brow-beating him like some feudal baron telling him to know his place. *The Independent on Sunday* (13 July 2003) quotes him as saying: I'm the most persecuted man in Italy.

He is arguably the man most above the law in Italy, since his supporters pass a law to make the premier immune from continuing corruption charges.

This forthcoming EU president insults a German MEP compared to a Nazi concentration camp guard. He refused German chancellor Schroder, demanding he apologise. Instead, an Italian junior minister denounces blond nationalistic Germans.

Following the boss's bad example gets the junior minister, not the premier, sacked. The message is clear: one law for the top, another for those under them.

Schroder is known for his suppression by law of the German media claim that he dyes his hair, or indeed for daring to laugh at him at all. With unaccustomed restraint, Schroder refuses rise to the bait of putting himself in the wrong with his Italian counter-part, and merely cancels his usual Italian holiday.

Never the less, Schroder did try to use German law, as he has against German media, against a British news-paper, *The Mail On*

Sunday (report 19 January 2003), following the story of an alleged relationship with a political journalist.

After the second world war, German privacy law was intended to protect citizens against state propaganda. It was never intended to be hi-jacked by politicians seeking to avoid bad news affecting their hold on power.

Leaders of the EU are creating "a common legal space." A Charter of Fundamental Rights "will give more rights to governments and fewer to individuals."

"None of the European Union's plans includes the freedoms of Magna Carta, the presumption of innocence, habeas corpus or jury trial."

(The British Labour government continues to try to restrict trial by jury, and the ancient rule preventing re-trial for an offense.) *The Mail* sums-up: "All these moves pull Europe down to...state-controlled justice lending its support to power."

Then, presumably, the power elite would have no one left to quarrel with but themselves.

[To top.](#)

HG Wells used to go on about politicians who conveniently talked about nations, as if they were individuals. It may be pedantic to be more precise. One wonders sometimes.

The genial and likable former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was invited to give a lecture in Britain, which turned out to be something of an eye-opener. He mentioned "the political class" with no sense of irony. The term was coined by Clive Ponting for a self-perpetuating oligarchy, in his eye-opener on British politics.

Somewhat unhelpfully to the pro-European cause, Schmidt chose to be blunt. He explained, from national histories, why "France" is the leader of Europe.

If this politician thought of nations as if they were individuals, then one can see why he believed a choice of leader had to be made

among them. But to someone of my mind-set, and perhaps most British people, it simply means the interests of one nation are put before the others.

From there, it is an easy step to a pecking order of nations in Europe, with Germany as the main supporter of Frances "leadership." Indeed, France and Germany have agreed to make the same laws, and cast the same international votes, as if they were already one state.

On Europes fringe, maritime nations had their fishing waters invaded, as a price for their belated entry into the Common Market. Greenland, most dependent on its fishing industry, was made in effect bottom of the European Economic Community pecking order, and sensibly voted itself out.

A true European family of nations should not do that wrong to its historic relations. Such-like treatment remains a grievance in the UK, which has a significant independence movement. At any rate, Romani Prodi said of the draft constitution that smaller states making up most of the EU were still powerless.

The British Conservative leader (in 2003) Duncan-Smith wants a federation of independent states, instead of a united Europe. The party wants the EU to do less and to do it better. Duncan-Smith wants a referendum on the European constitution. The Labor government most certainly does not want this proposed oligarchy judged by British democracy. Tony Blair was quoted as saying it offers a good basis for agreement.

A constitutional referendum would be more to the point than referendum on the single currency. Denied the constitutional referendum, the euro becomes the symbol of an all-embracing European state to vote down. That's what comes of politicians evading the real issue of power to the people rather than themselves. There is no reason why business should not conveniently use a uniform currency in Europe or (as Keynes suggested) the world.

Frederick Forsyth pointed out one of the conditions for joining the Euro is that Britains gold reserves be moved to a central European bank in Germany. Should Britain wish to leave the single currency, the gold is non-returnable. Gordon Brown went half way to putting paid to that objection, by selling off half Britains gold reserves, at depressed prices.

The two sides of the European debate in Britain are not coming together to work out a formula for liberty in unity, or for running a government by agreement with consent. The politicians do that badly enough in their own countries, much less on a continental scale. Neither Labour nor Tory parties can agree even on a democratic voting system, merely preferring the systems that give themselves the best results.

Brussels bureaucracy has its critics as indeed does private sector exploitation of ordinary people. Reported in *The Sunday Express*, 1 June 2003, Tory MEP Christopher Heaton-Harris said:

"In 1999 the European Commission resigned en masse because it was seen to be incompetant and unable to clear up fraud and mismanagement in the EU. Nothing has changed."

MEPs spent an estimated £3 million on a comic book heroine MEP called 'Irina.' Tory MEP Martin Callanan said:

"The European Parliament has found its natural level with the publication of this comic book, stuffed full of self-congratulatory claptrap and Euro propaganda."

For eight years running, the European Court of Auditors has refused to accept the accuracy of the EU accounts, and has condemned the lack of proper financial accounts since 1994. The latest figures available, those for 2001 showed out of a £65 billion annual budget, £3 billion missing, which comfortably swallows up Britain's £2.2 billion contribution.

Sixteen per cent of the annual budget is wasted alone on moving the European parliament from Brussels to Strasbourg every month, tho the latter is used only 60 days a year.

In theory, the political parliament for community law could be left in Brussels. Strasbourg could serve as a parliament of economic democracy returning elected representatives from all vocations, professions, unions etc. (That is with the all-purpose and effectively democratic voting system, so often discussed here.)

The occupational elections should be part of the elections legally required elections for their governing bodies. So, there would be no turn-out problem, as would arise from a separate economic general election.

British politicians recently sabotaged over-due reform of the House of Lords, which is traditionally a chamber for the nations interests. Political and economic democracy, rather than bureaucracy and plutocracy, would give greater accountability to the general public in their communities and their work places, and damp the legal and financial exploitation of the masses.

July 2003; 19 august 2003.

[To top](#)

The Ashdown Diaries 1997 - 1999: lessons for electoral reform.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Section links:

The Project.

[Party Lists](#) for British Euro-elections.

How Labour got out of [its promises](#) to the Lib Dems of a Commons PR referendum.

Will the Lib Dems be [fooled again](#) on Commons PR?

Why additional or mixed member systems are [self-defeating](#).

Politics as a calling to [public service](#).

The Project.

20th-century Britain was the Conservative century, because the progressives were split between two parties, Labour and Liberals.

After the 1997 general election, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, Paddy Ashdown was determined to heal that split and give back to Britain the representation of what he saw as their natural progressive majority.

This re-alignment was called the Project, tho it tended to mean two different things to the two parties to it. To Labour, it was often couched in terms of merger. The Lib Dems resisted being swallowed up, leaving Labour without a radical rival to lever them to real change. To the Lib Dems it meant proportional representation, leaving Labour with the fear that once theyd got it, the Lib Dems would turn their back on Labour and put their Tory opponents in power.

Ashdown assures a dubious Labour of two-term support of ten years. Ultimately, he is concerned with parties working together, for pluralism against tribalism.

There are plenty of amusing cartoons in the book. The cartoonists seem to like Paddy. The frame that made me laugh out loud was from Steve Bell (featured april 1999) on the resignation as Lib Dem leader. He draws a rather oriental-looking Ashdown, who knows Chinese and their inscrutability, shown to his own party over coalition with Labour.

Blair addresses him: "Paddy - I'd like to thank you for your helping to de-tribalise British politics."

Blairs business suit sports a necklace of teeth (about the size of his own) and shrunken skull pendant. A long bone pierces the nose almost to the length of flying ears, together with the obligatory mad-eye.

While still in opposition, with Blair impatient for power, the Labour and Lib Dem leaders had become friends, apparently sharing

political ground. Volume 2 of the Ashdown Diaries chronicles the persistent and admittedly obsessive lobbying of the Prime Minister by Ashdown.

What is remarkable is how much time that the beleaguered Premier was prepared to extend to responding to Ashdown concerns. Did it make any difference?

Paddy Ashdown modestly says that the term “control freak” was all that he contributed to the common parlance. The phrase remains popular because it's all too relevant. I've used it many times, would never have guessed who I owed it to, and no doubt shall go on using it.

Actually, it's rare for any known person to mint a phrase at all. The history of popular lyrics offers: See you later, alligator. And that was in use in Louisiana before the song was written!

Ashdown was warning the Labour government, at its highest level, in its first few months of office, against being control freaks. But this didn't stop the Prussianisation of Britain with thousands of new laws and an onslaught of petty officialdom to criminalise and penalise ordinary citizens.

In the first two years of the New Labour government, the Diaries give the impression that Paddy is dealing with normal, if slippery, people. The heat of the kitchen has not had time to get to them, as later lurid accounts would have us believe. I can believe some of them, actually, because the sustained pressure of government, especially the pressures the government itself exerted for the misguided attempt to control public relations, would be bound to fray nerves.

Mention of "The Project" wouldn't be complete without the take of Greg Palast (The Best Democracy That Money Can Buy). Not content with exposing partisan subversion of American universal suffrage, corrupting the 2000 US Presidential election, he managed to pull-off the "Lobbygate" sting on New Labour, almost before the new administration had got under way, to leave the British people dazed by so soon and devastating an expose. Palast out-lined The Project agenda, making a virtue of no principles.

Shortly before the 1997 election, Labour having been out of power for 18 years, made Tony Blair seem almost a member of the counter-culture. He was given a hearing, which he turned into a stand-up comedy sketch.

He confided, more revealingly than he or we knew, that he had always regarded consistency as an over-rated virtue.

He amused with his zig-zagging party pronouncements, under zealous pressure from local activists, on some issue. And he never did find out what it was all about!

[Blair's sketch reminds of the sixties comic song, Here comes the judge, by Pigmeat Markham. The judge is indignant at being called "judgy." Me who's studied and studied and studied and still doesn't know what it's all about!

The BBC censored the song, which dared a passing mention of Ho Chi Minh.]

Ashdown records an American visitor prophesy that both Clinton and Blair would ultimately fail, because neither of them stand for anything.

Party Lists for British Euro-elections.

"Recommendation: We believe that the electoral system for the second chamber should maximise voter choice, and we therefore reject the idea of closed party lists. We thus propose that elections should be carried out using either open lists or STV. On balance we believe that STV is more in keeping with the needs of the second chamber."

The Tyler Report (Reforming the House of Lords: Breaking the Deadlock)

Quoted on the STV Action web-site.

[To top](#)

Ashdown counsel was water off a ducks back. In view of this, one has to wonder whether his tackling the government on constitutional reform really made much difference.

Proportional representation (of a degraded sort) was already agreed for the Scottish and Welsh assemblies.

PR for the European elections in Britain was required by continental partners, who did not want to see the partisan balance of the European Parliament biased by the British first past the post system.

It is difficult to believe that Labour had over-looked that they would lose Euro-seats under FPTP. Ashdown was there to keep prodding them on the issue. He was concerned that the Tory majority in the House of Lords would sink PR by continually throwing it out. But he doesn't give their reason, because it was a closed list system of PR.

The Lords moved open lists. But open lists can still elect candidates, as party nominees, without even getting any personal votes. This was admitted in the first Euro elections debates back in the 1970s. The Lords may have forgotten this but it seems Labour hadn't.

Ashdown also notes that the Labour leadership would want PR because it allowed them to cull some of their MEPs. They did and it was a bad example of control freakery. One of the victims wrote a book that dared to criticise how the Labour movement kept it in the family with regard to office-holding.

It should be emphasised that this oligarchic vindictiveness is only possible with party list systems where the party bosses make up the lists and if you are out you're out. It is different with the single transferable vote, where in Ireland deselected politicians have often been endorsed by the voters, because with the transferable vote voting for them does not split the party vote and there is proportional representation of individuals not just parties.

STV gives power to the people to defy party managers, so it is no wonder they hate it.

Indeed, one has to ask oneself why could not Labour or the Lords simply introduce the system already in use in the Ulster Euro elections? There the single transferable vote application of genuine proportional representation represents individuals proportionally and, in consequence, parties also.

And one has to ask oneself why Ashdown does not point out to Labour that STV is already in use and would naturally extend from Ulster Euro elections to Euro elections for the whole United Kingdom.

I think the answer has to be that Ashdown knows already that STV is anathema to the Labour Party. So much so, that it goes without saying.

How Labour got out of its promise to the Lib Dems of a Commons PR referendum.

[To top](#)

The second volume of the Ashdown Diaries witness the death and destitution that war brought to ordinary folk in the Balkans. The author is an expert in military matters but I am not, so I don't make any comment, tho I recognise the volumes use as a prime historical source.

Before foreign humanitarian crises took over, Ashdown single-mindedly tried to keep Tony Blair on course for introducing proportional representation for general elections. He continually reminded the Labour leadership of their pre-election Cook-Maclennan agreement to hold a referendum on proportional elections in Labour's first term of office.

This involved setting up a commission to decide the electoral reform for Westminster. There followed a tenacious struggle by Ashdown to ensure that the terms of reference or remit were adequate to produce a sufficiently proportional voting method.

In view of the fact that the Jenkins commission recommendation never was put to a referendum in all the 13 years that Labour remained in office, it may seem that Ashdown pursuit of a satisfactory remit was wasted effort.

I don't believe that this was entirely the case. When electoral reform showed itself in Canada, it was plain to see that they were influenced by these very terms of reference. On the basis of their like, the British Columbia Citizens Assembly came up with the single transferable vote, which is a truly representative system of

proportional election, proportional representation in the literal sense of the word, not merely proportional partisanship in disguise.

On the other hand, the limitations of such terms of reference were shown up by the way they were interpreted in the Ontario Citizens Assembly on electoral reform. In that case, the government stepped-in right away to impose their own interpretation and the assembly was rushed.

Despite the ultimate failure of Canadian electoral reform to date, Ashdowns efforts on the remit might be said to be still sending out a few ripples 14 years later. That is because the British Columbia citizens assembly was nominated, out of an international field of innovations in democracy, as among the last seven entries for a German prize.

In my postscript to the page, Against The Jenkins Report, I try to reconstruct how the recommendation had come about. The Ashdown Diaries make it possible to fill in a little more detail.

The first thing that we learn (on 11th of June 1997) about the Lib Dems choice of voting method for Westminster is that Paddy Ashdown and Richard Holme were considering a compromise with Labour should they not be able to get PR in the first term. This was to be a two-stage approach. The first stage was to be the Alternative Vote. The second stage was to add party lists to give the under-represented Liberal Democrats more seats.

In the end, this was the system, AV Plus, that the Jenkins commission recommended, tho Jenkins didn't believe in a two-stage approach.

On the eighth of October 1997, somehow The Independent got hold of the two-stage approach, tho only five people knew about it. They were Blair, Mandelson, Jenkins, Holme and Ashdown himself.

It is important to realise how early the AV Plus system was broached, by an extremely limited number of leading people including the chairman of the future commission.

The fact is that this system was nowhere in use in the world and no one was asking for it. There already was a system successfully giving proportional representation in Ulster (tho only re-introduced in a crisis) as well as the Irish Republic, and to many professional bodies in Britain. This system, the single transferable vote, is used by the Liberal Democrat party itself, their traditional and preferred system.

As discussed above, the diaries pass over STV without a mention by the Lib Dem leadership.

When Jenkins tells Ashdown that Tony Blair, in line with his party, was opposed to STV, Ashdown does not even bother to record the substance of Blairs lengthy and crucial rejection. That would be consistent with Ashdown being only too familiar with the fact. It was not news to him.

On sixth of November 1997, the appointed chairman, Roy Jenkins wanted to know whether the PM would at least be minded to accept what he might recommend. He asked for discussion with Blair and Ashdown before the commission decision was finalised.

On sixth of May 1998, Jenkins told Ashdown:

"He went through a long explanation of why Blair wouldn't give us Single Transferable Vote (STV) and AV was not acceptable..."

When I saw this diary entry, I thought: Where did that come from? There was no previous mention in the Ashdown diaries of STV as a prospective system.

I thought about this for a while and make a guess what happened. As discussed on my page about the Jenkins report, there was considerable support from contributions for STV but virtually none for AV Plus.

In my postscript to that page, I mentioned the rumor that Jenkins went to Blair with something recognizably like STV. And Blairs response was that it would be "put on the top shelf."

I know by myself, which research confirms, that people think they know all about voting method, don't see anything wrong with it, and don't think it's worth bothering about, until they're obliged to study it. Jenkins had been obliged to look at the evidence he'd received and it appears to have made some impression on him, however transient.

Of course, Ashdown wasn't on the commission and didn't himself feel so obliged to note down what was told him.

On that same entry (6 may 1998) Jenkins tells of two conditions for a new voting system: "it must be workable and durable; and it must secure Blair's agreement."

Since Blair wouldnt accept STV, as far as Jenkins is concerned that was a veto on STV.

Nor was Blair laid-back about this. On 4 march 1998, Ashdown "asked Blair to confirm that he would support the outcome of the

Jenkins commission.

T.B. Of course I will, provided it contains what we think it will."

In the event, Blair didnt support the AV Plus recommendation. Tho, Blair was one of only five people who knew of this 1997 Lib Dem leadership compromise with Labour, and so had plenty of time to say it wouldnt do. And this let-down happened even tho Jenkins obliged Blair by not recommending the single transferable vote.

No doubt this seems bad faith on Blairs part. One may be given pause by recalling how the new PM responded to an inter-viewer, at the time: I think the public know that I'm a pretty straight kind of guy.

But the Lib Dem leaders had themselves to blame for by-passing public discussion, which would have given a salutary warning of the merciless criticism of AV Plus, they could expect from a referendum campaign.

Had they known the truth, it would have saved a lot of trouble to people who made submissions, including the majority of ordinary people, who were never mentioned, not even merely counting what voting systems they supported.

It would have saved a lot of trouble, if the British people had simply been told beforehand that Blair in particular and his governing party in general werent going to have STV and the so-called Independent commission would abide by them rather than the public.

We are at least entitled to know Blairs long explanation why he wouldnt give us STV. This, after all, was the decisive submission to the commission. It should be made public, so that all can decide for themselves whether Blairs reasons were justified. "Roy the diarist" no doubt put this exchange on record.

I asked about the Blair veto of STV, thru the intermediary of his publisher, the biographer, who had Jenkins diaries in his possession, but received no answer.

On 17th of September 1998, during a long conversation at Chequers, Ashdown warned Blair that:

"There are some purists for PR in my party who may reject Jenkins on the grounds that it is not STV - and they have the power to call a special conference."

Ashdown notes that Blair was "astounded."

Ashdown remarks of his party constitution: "We are slightly more democratic than you."

TB (laughing): Well, we'll have to do something about your constitution, then."

Ashdown, also laughing, rebukes him.

This passage offers one more hint of the extent that the Labour leader was prepared to sabotage the democratic voting method. In itself, it may not seem much but it all adds up.

You have to realise also how inertial is the Labour party, how rooted in its collectivist conformist past, even tho none of the parties are now mass movements of ordinary people exerting an influence on the rich and powerful few. Rather, they are the tools of the latters lobbying, of which their stands at party conferences are just the most blatant signs. The lobbyists even turned-up at the Lib Dems since they entered coalition in 2010.

Reported in The Mail on Sunday (february 2011), the new Labour leadership of the two Eds, Miliband and Balls have the shadow

cabinet treated like pupils who must put their hands up in class, and fill in a form, like a school sick note, before they are given leave to speak to the public.

The mentality of control freaks has not abated.

There were also people outside the Lib Dems, supporting STV but rejecting AV Plus. (I was one.)

Ashdown wanted an early referendum on the Jenkins recommendation, because, as he put it, he didn't want time for the rats to get at AV Plus.

So much for AV Plus as a durable constitutional settlement, if Ashdown darent let AV+ be more exposed to the sun-light than Dracula!

Ashdown affection, for Roy, shows in his generous praise for the old boy. It wouldnt allow him to make hurtful judgments on Jenkins report, even had he been patient of the details of electoral reform, wherein the devil lies.

This is where the "rats" come in useful for the public interest and I wasted no time to get at AV+. Hence, my webpage: Against the Jenkins report (to be included in my sequel book on electoral reform).

Tony Blair autobiography, A Journey, doesn't even index the Jenkins commission. This reminds of the saying that history is written by the winners. Jenkins is described as "intelligent" presumably because a Jenkins, confessedly disappointed in Blair, said Blair was a second-rate intellect. And Blair says he "loved" Jenkins, presumably because Jenkins last essay admitted that Hugh Gaitskell, another Labour leader - and as many times election loser on much bigger respective

proportions of the votes than Blair as three-times winner - was the only politician he ever loved.

Will the Lib Dems be fooled again on Commons PR?

[To top](#)

The key to understanding members of parliament is that they want to keep their seats safe from elections. That is why, en masse, they voted down STV in the 2010 Constitutional Reform Bill. That is why Labours Plant report recommended anything but STV. And the preliminary Plant report made no secret of the reason: STV allows competition between candidates of the same party, in effect universal primaries. That's the end of safe seats in the patronage of party bosses.

The Jenkins report praised both Labour Plant report and its Conservative variant the Blake report, because they keep the single member system, tho in different ways. The euphemism is that single member constituencies preserve the "link" between an MP and his constituents, meaning that MPs monopolise a constituency each, which is just how they want it, not how the majority of people left unrepresented want it.

It is most unlikely any politician, Labour or Tory, could get himself elected leader, without bowing before this sacred vested interest. When David Cameron was getting himself elected leader of the Conservative party, he made plain that he would be keeping the single member system, which guarantees that a candidate has a monopoly of his party representation. That means no competition for public affection from candidates of the same party.

If a third party wants to break into the magic circle of the two-party system, with seats more in proportion to their votes, then they deem it prudent to steer clear of competitive STV elections. Or so they largely have done for the past 35 years since 1975.

Labour peers filibustered the bill for a referendum on the Alternative Vote on the fifth of May 2011. After the 2010 general election, Alan Johnson stated in a Guardian article his intention to convert Labour MPs to the long-denied referendum on the Jenkins commission recommendation. He claimed that AV Plus is the democratic voting system.

Johnson, who was allegedly parachuted into his constituency, is a protege of Blair and assuredly can be as little relied on. The question is whether the Liberal Democrats, having been once bitten, will be twice shy or twice bitten. From Labour point of view, it must be well worth trying.

The Lib Dems only say that STV is their preferred system. They know perfectly well that Labour and Tory won't have STV, if they can possibly get away with not having it. So, the Lib Dems accommodating nature, towards their two bigger brothers, opens the way for landing the British people with another ineffective voting system, this time for the House of Commons itself.

Labour has nothing to lose from this ploy. They win Lib Dem support and possibly votes, for the promise of the AV Plus referendum, helping get themselves back in power. Suppose Labour actually hold the referendum next time. No problem for Labour. All the fatal flaws in the Jenkins recommendation are revealed in the referendum campaign. The Lib Dems are made a laughing stock. And very likely they lose.

[P.S. May 2015.

Yes! The Lib Dems were fooled again, this time by the Tories, who gave them an AV referendum, that not even reformers wanted, and then campaign financed and media blitzed it to oblivion.]

Why additional or mixed member systems are self-defeating.

[To top](#)

Let me very briefly mention yet again the nonsense of additional member systems, like AV Plus, which goes to their very root. Additional or mixed member systems combine some members elected on a majority count and other members elected on a party proportional count. These are two incompatible principles of winner takes all versus power-sharing between the parties.

It has to be understood that this inconsistency of aims is mutually defeating. The majority count in the single member constituencies is rendered meaningless by dual candidature, because losing candidates are elected, any-way, with the second votes for a party list.

Likewise, the proportional count of the list votes is compromised by the fact that a large party, that wins more than its share of seats in the First Past The Post constituencies, in principle, might simply change its name to qualify for a share of seats from votes for the party lists.

That is the extreme case (*reductio ad absurdum*) but the point is the ambiguity of how different is different? Why should a junior partner that is not much different in its views from the bigger party be given

seats to represent views not much different from those already over-represented in the single member system? That is, when the junior party would not get that share of list seats, if it bore the same name as its senior partner.

In other words, party proportional representation offered by additional member systems is liable to be a sham, disguising an over-representation of mainstream views comparable to an out-right simple majority system.

Moreover, this ambiguity in AMS, that does not know whether it is either majoritarian or proportional, offers the scope for endless acrimonious dispute.

For instance, when a right-winger like Iain Duncan Smith became Tory leader, he expressed his belief that the Liberals are just like the Labour Party and didn't deserve proportional representation. In the 2010 coalition with the Lib Dems, he could hardly sustain that belief. But there are plenty of people who believe that the Tory-LibDem coalition is an Orange Book (laissez-faire liberal) sell-out of the Lib Dem leadership to the Tories.

It is alleged that in Italian elections, front parties to another party were deliberately set-up to garner a disproportionate share of the vote.

In short, an additional members system, in attempting to be proportional, does not resolve whether a coalition is really the disproportionate representation of one party with stooge party. And in attempting to be partly majoritarian, AMS becomes a minoritarian system of losers elected by dual candidature to the party lists.

And that is only the beginning of AMS troubles as the basic inconsistency throws up more dilemmas thru-out the whole sorry

unscientific system.

Politics as a calling to public service.

[To top](#)

There has to be a completely new attitude towards politics. Politics should not be just another career of personal promotion or self-advancement. Politics should be a calling towards public service. The general public gets on with its own business and is not expected to concern itself with the problems of the community outside the time it can spare from its own affairs. If the politician puts his own everyday life concerns first in the normal way, he should not be in politics.

The country needs to develop a democratic infrastructure with information-rich standing polling stations incorporated into the public library system, and other community centers, which should be extended, when feasible, to all centres of population and ring-fenced from the present austerity measures, that threaten its destruction by half, to the infamy of the Coalition.

This would make cheap campaigning possible, and deliver us from tax exiles volcanic cash clouds over marginal seats during general elections.

[After-note, March 2015: This last remark was made when a volcanic eruption from Iceland grounded British air-liners. And some wit, on The Guardian Comment is Free, tied the ash cloud in with the appropriately named Tory donor, Lord Ashcroft concentrating the 2010 general election campaign on the marginal constituencies, whose swings decide the election in the iniquitous First past the Post system.]

Cash for access to the parties and their leaders for lobbyists, biasing public debate in any way, should not be allowed.

All special interests should be democratically represented in the second chamber, so that all can be fairly heard but none privileged. The Lords should not be a perk for party fund-raisers.

A religious devotee feels a calling to serve the poor. Politics, like religion, is a call that not everyone can answer. Politicians first duty is to serve others and the public interest before his own. If you cannot do that, then you have no business to be in politics.

Politicians shouldn't be paid more than the average wage for their work. Representative payment will keep them in touch with the difficulties in getting by, that ordinary people have to go thru.

An average wage for MPs would also be an incentive to make the country as a whole richer. For instance, Britain sent up in smoke its chemically valuable fossil energy resources, doing little or nothing to develop renewable energy resources, such as the best tidal resources in the world for electricity generation, which it could have started developing half a century ago, as France did with its limited tidal resources.

To say nothing of the ground-breaking research nowadays into photovoltaic cells, with the prospect, thru this and other ingenious means, of moving towards personally owned energy-generation and financial freedom from the failed command economy, exemplified in the fixation on centralised energy generation.

Nuclear power is a lazy and ill-bred fouling the nests of your descendants with radioactive pollution.

1;4;5; 28 February 2011.

[To top](#)

The Two Cultures

and electoral lawlessness in Britain by the turn of the twenty-first century.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Links to sections:

By 2000, the British mainland had half a dozen undemocratic voting methods where one democratic method would do.

Democratic electoral reform side-lined by ["the two cultures"](#)

British [muddling-thru](#) electoral reform.

Early [reception](#) of the Jenkins Report.

By 2000, the British mainland had half a dozen undemocratic voting methods where one democratic method would do.

Currently five different kinds of electoral system are in use or legislated for, in the United Kingdom: first past the post, the alternative vote, the single transferable vote, the additional member system, and a party list system.

That is not all. First past the post at general elections may differ from local elections with more than one member per constituency. Also, the Scottish assembly is set to have a higher proportion of additional members than the Welsh assembly.

That's seven different voting methods in Britain. Eight, if there are elections to the House of Lords on yet another variant system.

The Jenkins report goes one better than this, by recommending "Alternative Vote Top-up" for general elections, a system that had never been used anywhere on the planet.

[Paddy Ashdown, as a high commissioner in the Balkans, was to over-see AV Plus in use. That is manifestly an accident of his being the main mover behind the Jenkins Commission and was using an official opportunity to promote its recommendation.]

Not to forget that AV Plus and the other additional member systems are themselves varying combinations of two systems, usually requiring two votes. These hybrid systems attempt (vainly) to correct each others faults.

Moreover, the Jenkins Commission proposal would count the alternative vote differently than for a Mayor of London.

[Postscript, march 2015:

City mayors came to be elected by the Supplementary Vote. This gave London voters two X-votes to elect the mayor. And two X-votes to elect the London Assembly by an Additional Member System. These two different systems use the second X-vote in two different ways: for a second individual preference of mayoral candidate, and for a closed party list of additional members to a single member system..

London voters also elected Members of the European Parliament with an X-vote for a (Closed) Party List (like the second X-vote for

Additional Members but without a first X-vote for a single member system).

On the same day, London voters used three different voting systems, using X-votes in different ways with different consequences.]

Britains rulers are prepared to use more voting methods than there are elected institutions to use them for. Swop all these methods round the various assemblies, parliaments, councils and what-nots, and the same voting intentions would elect more or less different sets of politicians every time.

Does the public not know its own mind? Does the public have a mind? Is democracy a figment of the imagination? Or is it just what the politicians, making the rules, say it is? Are elections doomed to be a delusion, in a dangerous world, that the governed have given their consent to the government? Dare no parties face what the people honestly think of them?

What has caused this crisis for democracy?
(I think it fair to call it that.)

The traditional voting method of first past the post has dissatisfied parties not getting enough seats for the votes to their candidates. These are politicians who could get themselves heard in the media but not get into office. Hence, the power struggle in the Establishment over the last quarter of the twentieth century.

This has been pitched to the public as a cause for "fairness" in the voting system. And people may be left to judge for themselves how much the ruling class really intend fairness to the public by an anarchy of voting methods.

Most in Britain's two main parties wanted to continue to take turns with victories in majorities of seats. The reformers wanted rule by majorities of votes. This usually required the proportional representation of smaller parties, as partners in majority coalitions.

Most politicians only wanted parties, not individuals, to benefit from any proportional count. There's the sting. This was how *more* became *less* democracy.

Thus, the Jenkins report is a truce between a proportional party system, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and a seat-majority party system on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays -- if you consider successive general elections as days of the week.

Neither the single-member nor the party-proportional systems are satisfactory. As a compromise, the British electorate are to be impaled partly on both horns of the dilemma. This is a fair specimen of Establishment logic on elections.

A referendum on first past the post against an additional member system, such as that of the Jenkins commission, is only an Establishment request to favor one or other faction of party monopolists: single member majorities or single member majorities more or less proportionally offset by list members.

Such a referendum does not offer a constitutional settlement. Elections perhaps decide what faction takes power. But the purpose of a referendum is not to sanction, in the constitution, party monopoly systems at all, whether of old or new bias. Base rules must not be biased.

Actions speak louder than words. The single member system was abandoned by the 1997 Labour government for a party list system of Euro-elections that gives voters only a choice between parties, the so-called "closed lists." It is evident that the real value of single

members to MPs was not so much individual MPs "constituency links" but the monopoly of representation they give MPs. For, those MEPs highest on the closed lists, made by party bosses, likewise monopolise their parties representation.

Five times in 1998, the Lords threw out closed lists, "to rescue democracy," as one of the peers put it. But "open lists" are similar to the Regional List proposed by a previous Labour government in 1978. Because it is still based on party-proportional counting, a mere X-vote for an individual candidate on a list may count toward the election of a party colleague you did not choose, or indeed a candidate who received no individual votes.

If this is the only rescue option for democracy, then God help us. The politicians won't.

Tho he had wished single members retained in a reform of general elections, Tory, Richard Wood MP (later Lord Holderness) said that not allowing the voters to give their ordered choice (1,2,3,..etc for candidates, for the multi-member system of PR by transferable voting, in the Euro-elections) was "an insult to the intelligence of the British people."

Peter Hain MP wrote a book, on Proportional Misrepresentation, to persuade the Left to keep the single member system for single party majorities (of seats). But he admitted this made no case against the single transferable vote (STV) for Euro-elections.

This is a sad comment on Labour prime minister Tony Blair, blaming "an affront to democracy" on the peers for supporting "open lists" (ineffective individual choice) against closed lists (no individual choice) of candidates. Likewise, PM ally, Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown misrepresented "the peers against the people," when party list systems are boss elections that set the parties against the people.

In a letter to The Independent (in November 1998) Andy Spring expressed confidence that the Green Party would win MEPs. They naturally look to Germany's party-proportional systems. 7% of party votes had just made them a coalition partner with the Social Democrats. In the 1989 Euro-election, British Greens set a record vote for their movement.

That was before their caucus got rid of their best leaders, like Jonathon Porritt. To prevent the parties putting their own choice above the people's, STV proportionally elects the most preferred individual candidates, say, Porritt as an Independent Green. With STV, he wouldn't have to be on the official Green list of candidates, to benefit from a proportional count: Because, with STV, votes are transferable by the people's preferences. With party lists, votes are transferable by one preference voter, the caucus or party boss, who has ordered his choice of which list candidates shall go into parliament.

There is the difference between elective democracy and "elective dictatorship."

The single transferable vote can be used at all levels of government and is, in Ireland. There is no need for more than one, much less five, seven or eight different systems in Britain. (STV could even elect, in a two-member constituency, a mayor and deputy mayor of London, as is usual in local government. That is to say STV can serve as a primary election for single -- as well as multiple -- vacancies.)

What makes the Establishment prefer five or seven, possibly eight, or as many different electoral arrangements as it takes, rather than let the British people use STV (sometime called "the super-vote") as many already do, for non-political elections?

Why do the rulers prefer electoral anarchy to electoral principle?
Why won't they suffer effective popular mediation for the peaceful progress of the people?

Democratic electoral reform side-lined by "the two cultures"

[To top.](#)

The divide between the sciences and humanities

Proof for C P Snow on "the two cultures" comes from the tragi-farce of British muddling-thru electoral reform. Four years after the original lecture, he summarised its claim:

"It is something like this. In our society (that is, advanced western society) we have lost even the pretence of a common culture. Persons educated with the greatest intensity we know can no longer communicate with each other on the plane of their major intellectual concern. This is serious for our creative, intellectual and, above all, our moral life. It is leading us to interpret the past wrongly, to misjudge the present and to deny our hopes of the future. It is making it difficult or impossible for us to take good action."

"I gave the most pointed example of this lack of communication in the shape of two groups of people, representing what I have christened "the two cultures." One of these contained the scientists, whose weight, achievement and influence did not need stressing. The other contained the literary intellectuals. I did not mean that literary intellectuals act as the main decision-makers of the western world. I meant that literary intellectuals represent, vocalise and to some extent shape and predict the mood of the non-scientific

culture: they do not make the decisions, but their words seep into the minds of those who do. Between these two groups -- the scientists and the literary intellectuals -- there is little communication and, instead of fellow-feeling, something like hostility."

(C P Snow, The Two Cultures And A Second Look. Mentor, The New American Library, 1964.)

There is nearly no representation of science, or technology, in the House of Commons (as tables show from Robert Blackburn: The Electoral System In Britain). Nor will there be, if party leaders appoint the Lords. Administration is recruited after Chinese civilizations competitive examinations in the classics.

Academics have used the distinction between knowledge and values, to supply information without judgment. (Of which you'll find some examples in volume II of the Jenkins report. The Stationary Office.) Charles Snow also criticised this doctrine of value-neutral science, at the end of his book, The Physicists.

Scientists have a perfect right to keep out of politics, if they wish (and so far as the consequences of their discoveries allow). The objection is to treating academic freedom as a privileged deal with the state -- you leave us alone and we'll leave you alone -- instead of acknowledging that general knowledge depends on a generally free society.

Academic freedom without a free society is as narrow as "party democracy" without representative democracy.

C P Snow never forgave the Royal Society for snubbing the aged H G Wells wishing to be a Fellow.

Wells no doubt did more than that obscure fellowship, put together, to promote science. But he was "a literary man." And, as Snow said,

British education has been the most compartmented, in the world, between "arts" and "sciences."

As for "social science," the Royal Society didn't believe there was such a thing. But then they didn't admit engineers -- the people who got their hands dirty -- without whom there would be precious little modern science, in all its uses and abuses.

Sir Charles Snow (in his 1968 lecture, *The State Of Siege*) was especially concerned about gathering the strength of science and technology in the rich nations to help the world poor. The Brandt report on world development wanted more humane aid. But governments that rejected that plan cannot be said to have made any less desperate the crisis of too many helpless people.

However, some scientists have changed their direction of seeking generalised understanding. For instance, systems analysis studied what specialties have in common. This may be adapted to solving human problems. For suchlike reasons, Murray Gell-Mann (as explained in *The Quark And The Jaguar*) helped set-up a cross-disciplines institute, one of the new "broad churches" of science. Man is, after all, a part of nature and some natural scientists are beginning to seek a unified understanding of this fact.

John Maynard Smith once called The Royal Society "a club for gentlemen," which is what the historian, Ensor said the House of Commons was changing from. Whether the humanities or the sciences have done less to bridge the two cultures, electoral reform has shown British government as a science-free zone.

British muddling-thru electoral reform

[To top.](#)

General election results were grossly out of proportion to the third party's support in 1974. Most in the big two parties didn't want to know. Most of the rest only wanted patch-up answers. The (Hansard Society) Blake report of 1976 and the Plant report of 1993 are both dubbed "admirable" in the Jenkins report of 1998.

They are three attempts that "things must change so that things can stay the same."

Like the Plant report, the Jenkins report avoids general considerations that might render invalid their particular and ad hoc approach:

"Our proposition for this country stems essentially from the British constituency tradition and proceeds by limited modification to render it less haphazard, less unfair to minority parties, and less nationally divisive in the sense of avoiding large areas of electoral desert for each of the two major parties."

(The case for and the functioning of a mixed system, p.V, last para.)

Like Blake and Plant, Jenkins is concerned to keep the (single member) constituency system, which most restricts locality and therefore prevents the extension of choice. Sticking with the most local system, they vetoed a more electoral system. It is not really elections but locations that the place-holders want.

The Jenkins proposition restricted the terms (regardless of their terms of reference) on which reform might be allowed. So, no genuine reform took place. As a rule, one tries to find the truth on its terms, not on ours. One has to have an open mind.

Such makeshift reformers saw the problem as giving the third party seats more in proportion to their votes, by ad hoc additional members from party lists (implicit or explicit). Monopolistic single members must be wrong, if they need so "correcting."

The scientific approach would be to replace them with a theory of elections based consistently on sharing. Instead, the wrong of monopoly is not admitted by the ad hoc reformers, who only compound it, by giving parties a monopoly of the proportional count, thru list systems.

The ad hoc reformers extend equality, more or less, to the smaller parties but confirm an electoral monopoly of equality on the parties, in a one-dimensional partisan society.

An analogy may illustrate why this is wrong in scientific, as well as democratic, terms. The geocentric theory of the planets motions is wrong, despite the "correction" by epicycles to describe apparent reverses, in traversings of planets, from an Earth-centred point of view.

The Jenkins commissions likewise unwieldy system is akin to an ingrained "geocentric" theory of single member elections, modified by "epicycles" of list candidates. (Sometimes the whole list is "rotated" or given a turn in parliament.) To those more or less against change, a "heliocentric" theory, with Earth as just one in a multi-member solar system of planets, is much too "remote" and "breaks the link" between God and His Earthly constituents, as mediated by the holy church of party.

A theory of elections based on inconsistent principles of monopolising and sharing will be mutually defeating in practise. The ad hoc reformers answer is to extend the monopoly more or less to third parties. In this, they confirm G K Chesterton adage: There is really only one party. Their tacit agenda of the partisan monopolising

of representation for a partisan state is not all that far removed from a one-party state.

This is the logic of the direction the ad hoc reformers are going in. For, even the limited pluralism they offer with ad hoc additional members is inconsistent with the monopoly of one party rule per single member constituency. Being so at odds with itself as a system, AMS won't work for all kinds of elections at every level of government.

Monopoly is inconsistent with representation, whose general principle must be one of sharing. That is proportional representation as distinct from proportional partisanship. But sooner than accept genuine PR freely sharing choice, which explains why it is the scientific theory that applies to all elections, the ad hoc reformers shunned an all-purpose system.

The reduction to the absurd of denying a system for elections in general is to deny general elections.

But, in the Stationary Office second volume of the Jenkins report, Key Evidence, the Labour party submission held that the Labour government accepted the Plant report principle (that is, lack of principle) of different voting systems for different elected institutions.

John Preston (of Surrey, in a Nov. 1998 letter to The Independent) wondered if anyone realised what a muddle of voting systems Britain was in. He suggested this was because of neglect to ask: What is the real aim and purpose of it all?

Early reception of the Jenkins Report.

[To top.](#)

My review of the Jenkins report and of electoral reform as a prime casualty of "the two cultures" was written shortly after the report launched.

Just out of interest, I make some reference here to immediate reactions (in early December, back to end of October 1998). Tho, I know this news rapidly dates.

The government sensibly allowed time for public debate. At the time of writing, there is no way of knowing whether "Alternative Vote Top-up" will be the voting system the government offers the people a referendum to change to.

The Conservatives, at party conference, said the Independent Voting Commission was "rigged" before its conclusion was published.

[This was true, as shown in previous chapter on The Ashdown Diaries]

The commission members represented a good spread of opinion. The government terms of reference were, I thought, fair and well chosen -- which has not always been the case for official bodies set up in recent years.

Nevertheless, I believe there was a basic error of approach that general elections could be looked at, without regard to a general electoral system. This neglect of scientific outlook is why I bring in C P Snow on the two cultures, as responsible for bad government.

The home secretary, Jack Straw put his name to the Commission terms of reference. His response, on television to Alternative Vote Top-up, looked breath-bereaved. He didn't know the system would be as complicated (or some tactful word for that) or take so long to

implement. And the commission itself had reached no decision, to closer than a crucial 5%, of just how many top-up MPs there should be.

How can one vote on an unmeasured measure?

The Conservative party leader, William Hague also admitted he didn't know the reform was going to be "so extraordinarily complicated." His definitely untactful summing of AV top-up was "a dogs breakfast," others have repeated since. He also pointed out that top-up lists give power to the parties, rather than the people. This predictable enough response from the Tories was, unfortunately, also true.

Simon Jenkins, in The Times, denounced party lists, "open" or "closed" as croneyism. But the most committed newspaper opposition came, as expected, from The Daily Telegraph editorial, captioning the Jenkins report as "rococo and wrong," and in rebellious mood against such an imposition. That is right but their opposition to all change limits their influence.

Perhaps the most significant early warning to the Labour government came from over 100 of its MPs forming the Labour first past the post campaign, led by Stuart Bell. He predicted AV top-up would "sink without trace." Such a swift and strong rejection must give the government pause for thought.

[AV+ did sink, but not quite without trace, more like a half-submerged hulk, in the shipping lanes of electoral reform. (Authors note: May 2015.)]

I was impressed by the intelligent attention of the audience to Jonathan Dimbleby tv panel debate. Mr Bell reckoned two-thirds of

the Cabinet were against the Voting Commission proposal.

The Liberal Democrats would certainly support a system that goes some way to proportionally representing them. Roy Jenkins, their former "Prime Minister designate" was politely spoken of. Tho, two Lib Dem councillors announced their opposition to his reform.

The Green party sees it as a step in the right direction (to them, a German-type additional member system) tho they've no immediate hope of benefiting from it.

The Liberal party (who broke away, when renamed Liberal Democrats) considered a historic opportunity had been squandered. They would work for the single transferable vote.

I've seen a photo opportunity for a panel of bright young things, in the parliamentary Labour party, supporting AV top-up, but as yet nothing to match their colleague, the formidable Mr Bell.

The editor, of Red Pepper, in a Guardian article, appearing with the eight-page Guardian edition of the Jenkins report, admitted straight-off it was a "fix" and a "fudge." This wasn't admitting much of a fairly obvious freak, even to the uninitiated. But it was about as far as anyone writing in The Guardian was prepared to dissent. She still urged "the Left" to support it.

The political commentator in The Independent was also favorable. But an article by John Curtice showed what an uphill struggle awaited reformers prepared to support AV top-up. On the whole, the media, full of "literary intellectuals," weren't going to de-rail the report.

There were signs the report had been leaked. Robin Cook and Paddy Ashdown had hinted the reform might not be highly proportional.

A Guardian editorial, several days before their papers massive endorsement, surmised that the report would be a hotch-potch that would please no-one.

This may turn out to be the final verdict.

[To top](#)

Open letter to the Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Section links:

Terms of reference and Comment.

J S Mill: true democracy of [minorities-guaranteed majorities](#).

Britains half-dozen undemocratic [voting methods](#) where STV would do:

First Past The Post; Alternative Vote and Supplementary Vote;
Additional Member System and AV Top-up; Party Lists;
Single Transferable Vote.

[Incoherent politicians](#).

Representation of [the disabled](#).

[Appendix](#): the failed nuclear vested interest lobbies humanity, rather than itself, out of existence.

Postscript (2 march 2010): Having ones evidence [officially ignored](#).

Terms of reference:

The Speakers Conference [on Parliamentary Representation] was established by the House of Commons to look into the reasons why there are not more women, disabled people and people from ethnic minority communities in the House of Commons.

It has to:

- * identify any particular difficulties people in these groups face in becoming Members of Parliament,
- * to recommend ways of supporting them; and
- * to recommend ways of tackling those barriers to their success.

Comment:

"Electoral systems have the potential for influencing the selection of under represented groups. Our research confirms that the first-past-the-post system used in most English local government elections contains the least favourable combination of factors likely to achieve this (Rao et al., 2007). The system coming closest to offering the best chance of promoting under represented groups is the Single Transferable Vote (STV) proportional system which was used for the first time in the Scottish local government elections earlier this year."

*Councillors Commission 2007.
(Quoted from STV Action web-site.)*

The under-represented cannot be elected, because the First Past The Post system is under-representational. This was known, one and a half centuries ago, by John Stuart Mill.

Commissions, with unsearching terms of reference, like this speakers conference, seem to turn out unfinding reports.

Judging by how much pre-eminence, the two main parties give to party, it is odd that the Speakers Conference terms of reference about minorities should not include the under-representation of third or smaller parties. Nor does it consider half the voters for either of the two main party candidates, who are denied representation by a single member system. First Past The Post comes up empty, politically as well as socially, for so many people, to discourage turn-out and dissatisfy dutiful voters, who are taken for granted.

Such "inclusion," as the two main parties profess to, is belied by their commitment to the exclusive single member system.

However, Labour deputy leader, Harriet Harman was reported in The Guardian as saying that nothing was ruled out. Tho, the conference does not have the traditional title as being on Electoral Reform.

J S Mill: true democracy of minorities-guaranteed majorities.

[To top](#)

The main solution to representing minorities is easy. Persuading Parliament is the problem.

In 1979, the National Health Service moved from First Past the Post elections of the General Medical Council to Single Transferable Vote (STV). The result was a change in composition from dominance by white male general practitioners to the proportional representation of women, immigrants and specialists.

"The Single Transferable Vote System was immediately recognised as having rendered a valuable service to the medical profession. It ensured, for the first time, accurate representation on the General Medical Council of women and immigrant members, as well as various specialist and other sub-groups within the profession."

(The Electoral Reform Society 1979. Accounts and Reports of the Council and Auditors.)

New Zealand subsequently introduced STV for its Health Boards. The British NHS has its problems. Simon Jenkins explained that hospitals have not been allowed to clean themselves, because of the Tory introduction of out-sourcing, a dogma subsequently sustained by the Labour government. (Tho, Scotland had the sense to abandon it.) It is as if the government decided the British people could not be trusted to wash themselves, and put out the job to private tender.

Of the professions in general, STV could achieve occupational diversity in the second chamber, as a House of Callings. This functional representation could take place with the legally required elections that the professions and trades must hold for their governing bodies.

Science succeeds by a testing of theory with practise. And the political laws of the first chamber could be tested by the widest economic experience from a vocationally representative second chamber.

If this kind of rigorous honesty of science could supplant top-down politics, it would bring an effectiveness to public policy of great advantage to that nation.

The 1997 Labour government accepted its party working report on electoral systems (The Plant Report). This admitted, in its preliminary report, that the single transferable vote is the best system for representing minorities. But then the commission asked how might it otherwise be achieved. This speakers conference is an admission of the failure of other means.

The Plant commission didn't like the Irish experience of MPs of the same party being in competition in a multi-member constituency, so that there is a higher turn-over of representatives. All this amounts to is that the voters have a better choice of candidates, including those from the same party. It means politicians have to pay attention to views from the ground up, more than from the top down. That is, on balance, a more robust and healthy democracy.

The lures of office ensure the top still has plenty of leverage in Ireland. So, the Plant report missed a balanced assessment, trembling for the loss of safe seats, and thus recommending anything but STV: four other systems, including the Supplementary Vote for The House of Commons.

The preliminary Plant report made slighting remarks of John Stuart Mill, the nineteenth century's most distinguished philosopher of science, as "frightened" and "fearful" of democracy, with mass parties of the working classes. (There are no mass parties in Britain now.)

The commission implied this was the reason Mill supported the Hare system, as it was named after its English originator (Carl Andrae was the independent Danish inventor by a few months previously). Hare system envisaged the nation as one constituency. This is of a bearing to the conference's work, because it shows how important the maximum diversity of representation was to Mill, its supporter. Though, Mill's speech shows Hare and himself were flexible on the issue of local constituencies, something that I've never heard from secondary sources.

It's an important point, because representation can only be as diverse as the representation is equally shared out. The largeness of the NHS constituency means that the representation is very proportional and the GMC a remarkably accurate reflection of the profession's composition.

Labour's electoral working party had only to look at J S Mill speeches, as an MP, in Hansard (now on-line) to see their slur

couldnt be further from the truth (like their report as a whole). Not only did Mill speak for extending the franchise to the working classes, he emphaticly endorsed democracy in principle. Not only in point of universal suffrage, but for women as well as men.

And he was a democrat, who explicitly warned that the democracy, we still have in practise, is a seriously deficient system. He urged Thomas Hares effective democracy of "personal representation" with both preference voting and proportional counting, essentially the system of proportional representation now known as STV.

Mill warned his largely working class constituency that the whole reason he was standing for Parliament was not to do constituency work but to extend representation, whether to women, to the working classes, or to promote accurate representation thru effective voting system. He did not financially promote his own candidature, tho he financially supported working class candidates.

Mill introduced the first bill for womens suffrage, which became a cause celebre every year after. Mill introduced the first bill for proportional representation, which no other MP would support. Yet it also was subsequently taken up in further bills right to our own times.

Britains half-dozen undemocratic voting methods where STV would do.

[To top](#)

First Past the Post: system of false majorities

"This idea that there is a strong constituency link under the[...] present system is fatuous. Most constituents know little or nothing about their MP, not even their name. Indeed, most of the electorate have never voted for their MP and never will. For example, George

Galloway was elected by just 18% of his constituents and the average for an MP is less than 35% (less if you count the high number of eligible electors not registered)."

*Neil Harding (Labour supporter) in his letter of 2 February 2008 to Michael Wills MP, Minister of State for Justice.
Quoted from STV Action web-site.*

J S Mill was quite clear that majorities should be given due weight of representation but not undue weight. True democracy represents minorities in true proportion to the majorities. False democracy is the tyranny of the majority. It is wrong that governments should deceive themselves, and others, that they have more support in the country than they really have, and thus, without compromise, go further than (or not as far as) the country wants them to go in some directions.

Mill reasoned that without minority representation, a majority itself soon turned into the false democracy of a majority of a majority. He said, if barely half the people in the country are represented in parliament, and barely half the representatives in Parliament pass the laws, then hardly more than a quarter of the population might have their views represented on any given issue.

Mill also noticed the discouraging effect of safe constituencies on participation. This remains pertinent to the last two elections with about forty per cent of the electorate not turning out. FPTP discrimination may amount to government with no more than the grudging assent of a small minority of the population.

Game-keeping for poachers is the besetting sin of Speakers Conferences, since the betrayal of the one and only great conference, the first, in 1916.

The "betrayal" in question was the removing of a democratic column from the agreed structure of proposals. This "column" was the single

transferable vote. But at least one undemocratic column, and plutocratic counter-weight, stayed in place, the hugely expensive lost deposit for a candidate not getting one-eighth of the votes.

The rascality, of the two party set-up, was exposed when this barrier was reduced to one-twentieth the votes, more than a half-century later, only when a third party, the Liberal-SDP Alliance was punished much less, by it, than either the Labour or Tory parties, because of the third party's much more even spread of support thru-out the country, that also denied them nearly any representation in a single member system.

In the 1983 general election, the third party got nearly 26% of the votes for their candidates, winning only three and a half per cent of the seats. This derisory system of injustice, to third party minorities needs to be borne in mind by minorities in general (women, too, "household goddesses" are a minority in public life). In fact, the third party polled almost as many votes as the Labour party 28%. Increasingly typically, all the parties are minorities.

There is reason to believe that even in the hey-day of the two-party system, that First Past The Post was suppressing the wishes of voters. An opinion poll in 1950 showed that about a third of the voters would be likely to vote Liberal if they had a chance of a majority. (J F S Ross, Elections and Electors. Appendix II.) There was nearly support enough for the down-and-out Liberals in 1950 to have won the 2005 election!

In the 2005 election there was a sixty seat majority for Labour on 35% of the votes, which was also only 22% of the electorate. This is an under-representation that might have been mentioned in the conference terms of reference, which it seems have not been adequately thought-out by a representative range of opinion.

[Post script, May 2015:

In India, 2014, a government coalition, with 31% of the vote, won 282 of the 543 seats.

The 2015 UK general election gave a governing majority of 12 seats to one party, on just short of 37% the votes. The balance of seats was stolen from the UK Independence party, with one seat for close on four million voters (3.88 m. or 12.6% votes).

The Green party got one seat for more than a million votes.

Both these parties had something to say about changing the voting system.

The leader of the Scottish National Party, called for a fair voting system, on principle, tho they gained 56 out of 59 seats, on about half the Scottish vote. Never the less, the SNP were less over-represented than the Labour party, despite all the seats they took from them.]

In Britains single member system, high-ranking party MPs are routinely found safer seats, if boundary changes make their seats marginal.

"[Lord] Moonie is a social friend of Gordon Brown and was ennobled in 2005. He gave up his parliamentary seat reportedly so that Brown could keep his in a boundary change."

The Sunday Times 25 january 2009.

The safe-seat-seeking is like a party game of musical chairs. It goes on behind the publics backs. Politicians pre-empt elections. They tacitly admit that First Past The Post defeats individual representation, while claiming (like benefit frauds) that individual representation is the reason that FPTP must be kept.

Politicians could not justify changing their seats to keep their jobs, if it were not tacitly acknowledged, that single member constituencies load the results with accidental party concentrations of dominance over the more disliked opposing party.

First-Past-The-Post politicians safe-seat deals show they lack the courage of their convictions. FPTP is a dishonest pretence of

personal representation. It is less democracy than patronage: patronage in how the MPs are found seats, and patronage of most constituents, who never voted for them. Many of those, who do vote for them, may not like them, or have any attributes in common, but are trapped politicly.

The lack of social diversity in the House of Commons is a by-product of sham elections that shut out all the voters from effectively choosing who they most want to represent them. First Past The Post must go, if you really want social diversity. As Lord Shinwell said: First Past The Post is undemocratic. He supported STV.

The perpetuation of First Past The Post in the Commons has depended on its exclusion of political diversity of beliefs in the affairs of the nation, with the doctrine of a two-party system. Tho, it was also wrong for the Liberal Democrats and smaller parties to typically prioritise partisan diversity above all the other possible kinds of social diversity that make-up the true country.

The Conservatives, like Labour, have tried to evade this truism. David Cameron, the self-proclaimed enemy of top-down government, tried to force a top-down system of social diversity on the Tory selection of candidates. This was the A-list, a national party list of Tory untypicals to be parachuted into local constituencies. Local selection committees rebuffed this imposition and the A-list was formally abandoned. Tho, the odd Press murmur suggests hopes of its revival.

Political honesty cannot be founded on such electoral dishonesty.

Alternative Vote and Supplementary Vote: wasted first preferences.

[To top](#)

The Alternative Vote (AV) or the Supplementary Vote are preference voting confined to single member constituencies, which means that,

on average, depending on the number of candidates, typically more than half the first preferences are wasted.

In Scotland, Single Transferable Vote (STV) local elections of 2007, nearly three-quarters of the first preferences elected candidates. (And most of the remainder will have effective second or high order preferences.) That comparison actually under-estimates the superiority of STV, whose first preferences are from a much bigger choice of candidates in multi-member constituencies, than the Alternative Vote (AV), confined to single member constituencies.

With STV, if first preferences more than succeed in reaching an elective proportion, or quota, of the votes, then second preferences are the next to help elect candidates.

With AV, there is not that possibility of surplus votes being transferred from highest to next highest preferred candidates, who also are the first preferences of some other voters. Instead, AV always excludes, successively, candidates with the least first preferences. And what counts with AV is the next preferences of the voters for these excluded candidates. (STV only excludes candidates if there are no more surplus votes to fill remaining seats.)

AV is slightly better than FPTP which is: no vote for ranking more than one candidate, or the Supplementary Vote: no vote for ranking more than two candidates. First Past The Post and Supplementary Vote *completely* waste all but, respectively, one or two preferences, which the "wasted vote" extortion often prevents voters making their highest preferences.

Additional Member System and AV Top-up: systems of false proportions.

The undemocratic nature of systems like the Closed List and the Additional Members System (AMS) became more recognised after adoption in Britain.

This is testified in the Richard Report, which recommended STV for the Welsh Assembly. It would be harder to justify the assembly

having full legislative powers, sought in a referendum, given the admittedly tenuous link between the voters and AMS.

As the Richard Report says, AMS denies the voters the basic right to reject candidates. It is a doubly safe seat system, a doubly unelective "election." Not only are there safe seats in the single member constituencies, there are safe seats on a party list.

The "Independent" commission on voting systems (the Jenkins report) recommended the Alternative Vote topped up with a party open list system (AV Top-up). All Additional Member Systems have the short-comings not only of the systems they combine but of the effects of their combination. They produce an amazing number of anomalies, that are steadily uncovered from study or their results in practise.

One of the more recent revelations is, for me, one of the most decisive refutations of these contradictory hybrids that try, self-defeatingly, to be both majority counts and party proportional counts. This relates to a practise, apparently exploited in Italian elections, of dummy parties. Italy tried and abandoned AMS.

The main parties that dominate First Past The Post elections can set up dummy parties to harvest seats from party list votes. This strategem gets round the disqualification of a party from having list seats, when it already has its share (or more) of single-member seats for votes.

Systems of proportional partisanship are corruptible into disproportionate partisanship or false majorities.

Having studied scientific method of elections, I am interested in the deeper implications of this inconsistency. Systems of proportional partisanship may not work even on their own limited terms. The party divisions are arbitrary and make a proportional count of party votes arbitrary and exploitable.

I would argue that, besides innumerable other failings, dummy or duplicative proportional partisanship is a definitive refutation of the

oligarchic restriction of representation to Party Lists, not least in Additional Member Systems.

FPTP is a system of false majorities. List systems, not least of Additional Members, are systems of false proportions also, in effect, false majorities.

Party Lists: the abolition of representative democracy.

[To top](#)

The few disabled MPs, one can think of, have triumphantly overcome their disabilities. Richard Wood MP (later Lord Holderness) lost his legs as a fighter pilot. He took part in the debate on the electoral system for the first British Euro-elections.

STV was already used for local and assembly elections in Ulster. And it really had to be used for Ulster Euro-elections, because the transferable vote was needed to prevent a split in the nationalist vote between the war and peace parties, which would have deprived them of one of the three Ulster seats representing the Irish nationalist third of the population.

Were the British people to be availed of the evident advantage of STV?

Oh, no sir! Those sheep were to get the Regional List with an X-vote. Tho, the Home Secretary had to concede in debate that the Regional List could elect a party candidate with no personal votes, merely because he was on a party list.

That gallant man, Richard Wood got up (on his artificial legs) with an amiable observation about not knowing the Home Secretary was a follower of Machiavelli [a by-name for devious politicians]. Of not allowing the voters to use a number order of choice (for a transferable vote in a proportional count) Wood said: It is "an insult to the intelligence of the British people."

The history of British Euro-elections shows that the Regional List was defeated in the Commons, in the late '70s, precisely because Open Lists are ineffective in achieving individual representation. Back in power, in 1997, Labour gave up trying even to pretend to favor democratic system achieved by democratic discussion. Tony Blair simply dictated that the Closed List system would be used for British Euro-elections. The Lords over-looked the Regional List farce of twenty years ago. They threw out the Closed List five times, in favor of the false pretences of an Open List.

Open Lists are bound to be fraudulent of individual representation, because the priority of all List systems is to secure proportional partisanship. Personal representation, if any, is only an after-thought. Whether the list gives socially diverse representation depends on the patronage of the party, its activists or its managers or boss. Also crucial is how high any women or minority candidates are placed on the list. The list is a party-privileged preference vote, denied the voters.

Whereas STV makes a proportional count of a preference vote for every voter. STV is democratic PR. List systems, including mixed systems like AMS, are oligarchic PR.

Partisan corruption, from lack of preference voting, is evident, by chance or design, in the Closed List for British Euro-elections. For example, in the Yorkshire constituency, the Alliance of Green Socialists list split the vote from the Green Party, thus lessening its chance of Green supporters gaining a seat.

A preference vote is essential for a proportional count, which was understood by the inventors of PR.

Single Transferable Vote: the system for all elections.

[To top](#)

One test of whether STV is good enough to be called democratic voting system, while all the other systems are not, is that it alone can

be used for elections in general. STV furnishes a scientific standard of comparison, between election results, that can give an objective assessment of changes in public opinion. STV is true democracy.

STV is the only system that can be used for all elections, political or non-political, and at every level of government - as it is in Eire.

The Labour party Plant report abandoned both scientific and democratic standards, when it pretended there is no principle that could decide a definitive voting method, and urged different electoral systems for different institutions.

Inevitably, Labour lack of electoral principle was dignified as a principle. Under Labour government, Britain got half a dozen undemocratic voting methods where the democratic method would do. (That was until 2007, when Scottish local elections introduced STV, which unlike Welsh reports for STV, escaped their censorious jurisdiction.)

A quiet realisation of voter confusion with AMS for the Scottish Assembly may have contributed to the decision of the Kerley Commission to recommend STV for local elections.

The STV local election constituencies were of three or four members, which is not highly proportional. This is the Irish distribution of seats per constituency, that had been whittled down by Irelands largest party to give themselves some disproportionate advantage and the increased chance of one-party rule.

Nevertheless, STV gave a reasonably proportional representation to Scotlands four main parties, as well as some minor party seats. The representation of women did not increase but fewer women candidates were put up. With STV, the women candidates, who did stand, had about the same chance of election as men. So, STV seems to offer a good chance of solving the under-representation of women.

Wendy Bergerud, one of the randomly chosen members of the British Columbia Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform, wanted to make sure that STV was not biased against women. She decided the advantage for women is with STV as a fully multi-member system, compared to AMS, as a proportional system, where half the seats are still from professional white male dominated single member constituencies.

If the main parties don't put up more women candidates, in Scottish local elections, then smaller parties or independents may move in on this virgin territory.

This can be said with confidence, because the transferable vote ensures voting first for a woman or minority candidates won't be a wasted vote.

The 2003 local elections with FPTP gave voters just less than an average three and a half candidates choice, compared to nearly seven and a half candidates with STV. This choice with STV is already more than double the choice with FPTP, and is expected to rise, as some parties could have expected to win more seats with more candidates.

STV in Scottish elections effectively abolished uncontested polls from no chance of winning under FPTP. Minority parties were encouraged to put up more candidates. And social minorities in general must fancy more their chances of winning seats with STV, albeit under only moderately proportional multi-member constituencies.

Diversity of representation depends on the degree of proportionality or sharing. Ethnic groups are a very small minority in Scotland and the first STV elections didn't change their amount of representation. As a matter of fact, the representation of young people improved.

It probably isn't a coincidence that the first ethnic Chinese to be elected in the UK was to the Northern Ireland assembly. Here STV is used with six-member constituencies. The fragmented nature of Ulster politics demanded that higher proportion of representation. It

potentially offers considerably more social diversity than a three or four member system.

Only STV can offer social diversity of representation as well as it offers political diversity of representation, because the system is, as Mill called it, "personal representation" and the attributes in candidates that are most important to the voters, can go into their orders of preference.

STV is the most enabling system but as the saying goes: You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. The fact that women are poorly represented in Ireland and Malta is a faith phenomenon. Only a year or two ago, the Roman Catholic church pronounced that women should stay in the home and keep out of public life.

Some critics have used the coincidence that STV is used in two paternalistic societies to pretend that STV harms womens representation. One could make equally unscrupulous claims in favor of STV. The turn-out in Ulster Euro-elections is the highest in the United Kingdom. And over 90% turn-out in Maltese elections exceeds the rest of Europe.

That does not prove that people take best to STV. (Tho they may. STV is admittedly popular in Ireland.)

The Kerley report was a New Deal in the relation between represented and their representatives. It proposed radical improvements to the status of representatives. They would be given opportunities to gain qualifications in their terms of office, so they could move on to other work, if they were defeated at subsequent elections.

The real deal was that, in return for such advantages as career training and support, the elections should be genuinely elective, namely by STV.

The Sunderland report gave more reasons for recommending STV for Welsh local elections.

Furthermore, the Arbuthnott report, on the four different electoral systems in Scotland, made a substantial move towards the wider use of STV, recommending STV for Scottish Euro-elections, and leaving open the possibility of STV for the Scottish parliament.

It must be admitted that this report was less well informed on STV than its Welsh counterpart, the Richard report. Unfortunately, both the Welsh reports for STV, the Sunderland report and the Richard report were rebuffed by the politicians in Wales and in the Commons. This could only act against a consensus for STV that electoral reports have been coming to.

Incoherent politicians.

[To top](#)

The Power commission, chaired by Helena Kennedy, diffidently acknowledged the emerging pattern of support for STV.

The commission research, funded by the Rowntree Trust, found that people thru-out the country were turned off politics because the parties, once social clubs of the classes, were an ineffective means to change policies and get things done. Politicians offered too little meaningful choice in elections.

STV could make good the deficiency of choice.

The Power commission held a meeting in Westminster. Well, it was laughably predictable in its out-come, when politicians graced the event.

David Cameron turned up to make a speech, giving the impression he had convened the meeting himself, by thanking people for turning up. He took good care to make clear that moving from the single member system was not an option: at least we've got that right, he asserted. To him, it was enough that MPs did constituency work for ordinary people, who needn't get political ambitions.

Peter Tatchell, who was on the platform, picked up on Cameron being against fair votes. His suggestion of two-member

constituencies was scarcely more inspiring.

Someone put to a bright young thing in the Labour government that they should take off the whips to allow free speech in Parliament.

All he replied was: That's not going to happen.

End of debate! This resistance to other points of view exposes the self-sufficiency of British government preventing Parliament from doing its job of progress thru learning by free debate on the best courses of action.

Science succeeds because it honestly seeks out all available opinions that might invalidate preconceptions and get a bit closer to the truth. Science succeeds because it honestly tries to be freely democratic. Politics fails because it clings to its governing prejudices in wilful ignorance of truly representative opinions.

Democracy and science are a virtuous circle. Vested interests and ignorance are a vicious circle. This ignorance suits vested interests lobbying government parasitically against the public interest. (The appendix gives one example of a potential disaster from top-down dogmatism in government.) The community that learns that lesson will have a competitive edge over those that don't. Nations like Britain, whose governments don't learn, face worsening degradation.

The political parties have been deserted by the masses, whose interests they no longer serve. Now, the Environmentalists form a mass movement in the public interest. That generous-minded and prescient man, John Stuart Mill was a founder of the first of these organisations, which works to preserve the country-side for the benefit of future generations.

The Lords debate, on the Power report, was dismissive, including from the Labour spokeswoman. The Westminster village would be unwise to have no sense of public feeling, until it shows itself in organised defiance.

For its pains, the chief political correspondent of the Independent (a Blair biographer) disdained the Power commissions mild approval of STV. This media lobbyist preferred to agonise about "Gordon" being

determined to take over from "Tony." Tho, the Independent is the only paper that launched a formal campaign for proportional representation after the 2005 election.

The 2005 government was "elected" from the faults of the system, with one of the most anomalous results in British history, as well as one of the lowest turn-outs.

A committee, chaired by John Prescott, was set-up to look into the matter. Its privacy ensured nothing more was heard of it, till its predictable recent decision that nothing needed doing.

In Tony Blairs farewell Labour conference, Prescott made one of his evangelising speeches for the party faithful. There he declared that Blair had won three "landslide" victories. From this vain-glorious remark, it was evident that the chairman of the alleged committee on electoral reform, had given no thought on the matter.

It is perhaps noteworthy that the tv coverage cut him off, as he was getting worked-up into full flow, as indifferent to what he had to say next, as his own indifference to electoral justice.

It doesnt seem to worry the government to state principles which they resist in practise. Following the Prescott committee ignorance of partisan bias, Michael Wills, the justice minister (in january 2009) announced a principle of elections without partisan bias:

"It will also be fundamental to our approach that the electoral system itself must be beyond partisan dispute. While elections will always be vigorously contested, and rightly so, the foundations of the electoral system itself should not be the subject of controversy.

Therefore, however justifiable any proposal may be in its own terms, we must always be wary of seeking to implement solutions to any given problem and implementing any given principle if, in doing so, it creates, however inadvertently, a biased outcome in the electoral system as a whole...

Anything that undermines the principle of a level playing field for all democratic political parties is axiomatically partisan and risks

illegitimacy."

John Prescott moved referendums on regional assemblies for the North East and Yorkshire. By diktat, the system to be used was the Additional Member System. Since AMS is the doubly safe-seat system, it made little practical difference, when Prescott appointed regional bodies, after the referendums voted NO to them. The sham democracy would have been little or no better than the bureaucracy that the public got, anyway.

The 1998 "Independent" commission on Voting systems (the Jenkins report) didnt have particularly robust terms of reference. But it was supposed to be independent.

Yet at the Jenkins report press conference, the chairman discounted government powers of tolerance. This was his excuse for such a lame duck recommendation as AV Top-up. Apparently, Roy Jenkins still had that "flea in his ear" that Barbara Castle diaries confided the cabinet gave him, when he suggested proportional representation, after the Liberals got 14 seats for six million votes, in the first 1974 election.

The suspicion is that the Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation (formerly Electoral Reform) is just another public relations ploy of Parliament to pretend it wants to be more representative without taking the necessary means of electoral reform to truly become so.

Modern political discourse lacks either understanding or inclination for genuine democracy, as promoted by John Stuart Mill and his successors. Among many reformers and researchers, of all political persuasions, like Mill, HG Wells had a scientific education and was a foremost campaigner for PR by STV, as the definitive method of elections.

Representation of the disabled.

[To top](#)

Unlike the triumphantly self-enabled, some disabled people can never be accommodated to Westminster routine. They have to be accommodated on their own terms, if they are to participate in public life. This means an extension of the technology, they already rely on, to bring the political arena into their own homes, with tele-conferencing etc.

Having a severely disabled friend, I know that they bring their own unique out-look on life, that we can all learn from.

She told me how the government had told the deaf to stop using the signs for: Jew, a crookt finger, and for gays, a limp wrist.

The deaf community was seething at the insulting implication that they were racist homophobes, and at being told how to behave, as if they were naughty children.

Oliver Sachs, on deafness, showed that such shaped sign language is by far the easiest and the fastest way for the deaf to communicate, not least when starting from no linguistic medium in common. To censor sign-language, for political correctness, is to stupidly handicap the ability of the innocent deaf to communicate most efficiently.

It is also an attack on freedom of expression.

In my opinion, this blunder is typical of what Simon Jenkins called government impulse to "do something even if it's stupid." It is full of cheap substitutes, or wasteful cosmetics like the "Respect" initiative, yet another bureaucracy, for government to deny people self-respect thru self-determination.

Appendix: the failed nuclear vested interest lobbies humanity, rather than itself, out of existence.

[To top](#)

Many environmentalists have stated this case better than my own attempts. I'll just mention a few salient points here, that have a bearing on the need to protect the public interest against private interests capturing the government.

I'll say straight away that one constitutional remedy would be Equality of Lobbying. That would entail an economic franchise, with proportional representation (properly applied by STV) of all interests in the second chamber of government.

Equality of Lobbying would be a constitutional check on "casino capitalism," the gambling away the public's savings by deregulated financial institutions, that has led to the worst recession in 80 years. It would also be a check on "crony capitalism," as is known to have swept governments across the world, "in our corrupt and undemocratic age" (as G K Chesterton was wont to repeat).

A foremost example of this is the so-called "nuclear cronyism" of the Brown government, by the Tories before they mysteriously succumbed to the nuclear lobby themselves. Moreover, The Times (in January 2006) revealed that powerful organisations, including the nuclear and pharmaceutical industries, are funding policy reports of supposedly independent groups of MPs.

The Labour government went into the 2005 election with the 2003 report for renewable energy. On return to power, Blair launched a blitz for nuclear power "back with a vengeance." A new energy review, like the dodgy dossier promoting the Iraq war, also was not independent, amounting to government propaganda.

A Guardian reporter (Roy Greenslade in January 2008) asked why The Sunday Times story of the criminal sale of the Wests nuclear secrets was not taken-up by the American media.

Moreover, the British PM has been acting the nuclear salesman to the world, though the civil and military technology follow one from the other. It is the proverbial match throwing into (nuclear) powder kegs.

In January 2009, retired generals condemned a new Trident program as irrelevant waste. Twenty years ago, Carl Sagan and associates

calculated that even a regional nuclear conflict (which would probably escalate anyway) would cause a Nuclear Winter. A rather less credible Gordon Brown used the regime in North Korea, as his excuse to rush into bolstering the nuclear vested interest with public money. It's a mockery of public debate and prudent spending.

The next general election promises to be as meaningless as the last, with the two main parties both sold on more nuclear power stations, so there is no impartial discussion and the public are given no effective choice.

The government has neglected to develop this countrys abundant natural forces and the onset of a world renewable energy inventions revolution, that could give the public substantially free sources of energy.

Instead, the British government of vested interests for vested interests by vested interests wants future generations to be forever stalked by the deadly dangers and costs of radioactive waste and nuclear weapons proliferation that could cripple or even destroy advanced life on earth.

Amongst other freedoms, electoral reform by STV (and Equality of Lobbying) is needed to break the lobby-funded main parties blockade of democracy.

References:

Parliamentary Reform speeches of John Stuart Mill MP [included in my sequel book on election science.]

Lewis Baston of the Electoral Reform Society: Local Authority Elections in Scotland. (pdf).

Electoral Reform Society Parliamentary bulletin, january 2009.

Richard Lung.
February 2009.

Postscript (2 march 2010): Having ones evidence officially ignored.

[To top](#)

I found out by enquiring that my evidence, given above, was one of very few submissions not to be published in the Written evidence (HC 167-II). I wouldnt have minded that so much but they didnt even publicly acknowledge receipt of the hard copy, they asked for, nor provide a reference to my web link.

Initially, the secretary admitted there should have been public acknowledgment and promise was made to give this, later. I was even sent all the parliamentary books, which showed the promise was not kept.

Of course, Ive been ignored before. That's the thankless task of a teller of inconvenient truths to those so determined as Parliament to ignore them.

So I can confirm David Nice comment not to mention his others (HC 239-III. SC 109):

"I pointed out that a proportional representation voting system such as Single Transferable Vote would *automatically* have the effect of improving for example the gender balance. This has been ignored."

In that third volume, a list of unprinted written evidence was given: an ethnic partisan group, three names and The Supervote Campaign.

I did not know there was such a campaign but the term, super vote

was used by Joe Rogalay, in his book, Parliament For The People, as a campaigning name for STV.

The final report shows the drastic decline in support for political parties in Britain (mirrored in Europe). Throwing more public money at them (Democratic Diversity Fund) features in the recommendations how things must change if things are to stay the same.

[Nearly four million votes in the 2015 general election earned the UK Independence Party a windfall of £650,000 in public money, that the parties donate themselves as "short money."

The one UKIP MP, mindful of expenses scandals, objected to its being splurged on a fifteen-strong parliamentary staff.

He was, to my mind, viciously set-upon by his party officialdom, for resisting the spoils system.]

I would sum-up the work of this Speakers Conference as the quest for how to achieve proportional representation without proportional representation.

[To top](#)

Consultation on Scotlands electoral future.

(Response by Richard Lung.)

[To Table of Contents](#)

- 1) Integrating election procedure into community life.
 - 2) Theory of [turn-out](#).
 - 3) [Trustworthy](#) politics.
- Further references.

1) Integrating election procedure into community life: a democratic infrastructure based on the library system and other community centres.

Introducing myself, I am English (which is why I don't fill in your questionnaire, which is no reflection on its importance) but was approached at end of 2009 by a request to work with me, should the occasion arise, which I agreed to, and which turned out to be from the Constitutional Commission of Scotland. The aspirations of the draft constitution are close to my own heart and mind and this evidently had been noticed of my Democracy Science website.

That site includes a discussion of using libraries as standing polling stations:

<http://www.voting.ukscientists.com/library.htm>

That page was meant to be a further reason against the false economy of closing libraries, which is as hugely unpopular in Scotland as the rest of the UK.

Britains antiquated democracy is symbolised by the flying polling station, an after-thought to our lives, that appears for a day in some makeshift location. It presents the voter with that ultimate in information poverty, the bare cell of the polling booth, where the ballot paper is likely the first and last intimation we receive of who wishes (allegedly) to represent us. This consists of names and their parties, offered to the electorate, as tho the candidates were enemies, surrendering only their names and dog tags.

The library system and the community centre with the information infrastructure of the Internet, the modern interactive electronic media, should be the basis of a democratic infrastructure. They could become standing polling stations with up-datable election campaign resources, announcements, inaugurations, meetings and discussions, giving a more level playing field to all citizens seeking candidature.

Radical ills require radical remedies, if the kingdom is to develop a civic culture.

In my own innocent youth as a student, I was required to write an essay on different election methods, I thought I knew all about it, from sitting up on general election night. I started my essay, to get it over with, by trotting out all the conventional wisdom that saw nothing wrong with the first past the post system. Reluctantly I

realised that I would have to consult a couple of books. One of these was Elections and Electors by JFS Ross. Then I saw the light.

Even so, I set aside this new knowledge for several years, as of no vital import, before making scientific method of elections one of my lifelong preoccupations.

The moral of this story is that the voters need to be educated. JFS Ross made me aware that STV gives a much larger proportion of the population representation with a much greater freedom of choice. It was a good while longer before I appreciated the power for uniting a nation that a transferable vote offers. Parties generally do not like admitting the voters might have more than partisan loyalties. But questions of national destiny cross party lines.

Whatever the outcome of the Scottish independence referendum, it is likely to be a divisive business, and the transferable voting system, that allows voters to transcend divisions to express degrees and kinds of national unity, should give the nation a better sense of direction.

The proviso is that the people understand this unifying electoral power of the STV system.

(Not, then, the Maltese parties instructions to prefer the candidates of their party "and then stop.")

First recommendation:

Democracy must have a democratic infrastructure, as of the information-rich standing polling station, for practical purposes, included in the library system and other community centers, to develop a civic culture in the local community.

2) Theory of turn-out.

[To top](#)

Supposing representative democracy is brought into the common traffic of peoples lives. This by itself would not solve the turn-out problem, if the representation is not representative enough to justify the voters turning out for.

All my life, the monopolistic single-member system has never represented my views nor even offered a good choice of candidates.

Assuming for theoretical purposes, that all the voters have perfect access and perfect information about the candidates, an expected turn-out can be statistically predicted, depending on the amount of choice, and given "effective voting," as Australian pioneer reformer Catherine Helen Spence called the single transferable vote.

For a single member system with two (realistic) choices, as in the United States two-party system, there are four logical possibilities of choice:

- 1) Both Republican, R, and Democrat, D, are equally preferred
- 2) Both R and D are equally unpreferred.
- 3) R is preferred to D.
- 4) D is preferred to R.

Only in cases 3 and 4 do the voters have any reason to express a wish or vote. As that is only half the cases, the expected turn-out is 50%.

This is the direction of the United States, followed lately by Canada. As the saying goes, what starts over there, ends up here, as British voting trends suggest.

The binomial theorem shows how increase in choice decreases the proportion of voters who are equally disposed, preferentially or unpreferentially, to all the candidates, and so have no reason to participate in the election.

The binomial theorem gives the logical possibilities of choice as two to the power of the number of choices.

So, for two choices there are two to the power of two, which equals four possibilities. That is in symbols: $2^2 = 4$.

Whatever the number of choices, the number of possibilities, for total indifference to all the candidates, is always two, namely all candidates equally preferred or equally unpreferred. Therefore the neutrals dramatically decrease, as a proportion of the voters, with the successive increase in choices of representatives available.

So, for three candidates, the logical possibilities are $2^3 = 8$. Two out of this eight are indifferent, so the turn-out is eight minus two equals six. That is as a ratio, $6/8 = 3/4$ or 75% turn-out.

In theory, an (STV) four-member constituency should give a turn-out of $14/16$ or about 87.5% and a five-member constituency a turn-out of $30/32$ or 93.75%.

Hence the democratic justification of "The HG Wells formula." Wells repeatedly advocated "proportional representation by the single transferable vote in large constituencies."

In case anyone asks has STV ever actually polled over 90% turn-outs. It has in Malta, with the highest turn-out in Europe. Whereas

Northern Irish STV Euro-elections have the highest turn-out in the United Kingdom.

Therefore, it is as well that the draft Scottish constitution specifies a minimum of four-member STV constituencies, which is one more than the minimum of three in the Irish constitution.

The Irish constitutional convention recommended a minimum of five-member constituencies.

Irish politicians twice tried to remove STV in referendums, that proved to be against the popular will. Recently the Irish constitutional convention overwhelmingly reaffirmed support for the STV electoral system.

At present, the Scottish government does not have home rule in the basic right to improve election method in Scotland but must seek permission from Westminster.

As Roy Jenkins remarked in his commission report on electoral systems, turn-out in the early Irish republic was extremely high. This has fallen. But the whittling down of the size of constituencies to mainly three or four members, cutting out all but mainstream opinion, presumably would be a factor in that.

No doubt, a three to four member system in Scottish local elections is less than best, given a four-party political system with significant minor party presence, and of course Independents important in non-political local issues. Larger multi-member constituencies, especially in the cities, would encourage a broader political spectrum of representation and participation.

The Scottish local elections turn-out in 2012 of just over 39% is low, though higher than English local elections turn-out at 35%. That is why

the first part of this submission emphasises the need for democratic infrastructure in Scotland as well as the whole UK.

The Arbuthnott report did recommend extending the use of STV to Scottish Euro-elections. And they left open its use for the Scottish Parliament. This diffidence may be attributed to Westminster disapproval of the Richard report recommending STV for the Welsh assembly, because the Additional Member System denies voters the fundamental right to reject candidates, largely due to dual candidature in single-member constituencies and on party lists.

The Arbuthnott report dealt almost jocularly in some instances with public mystification over AMS. Obviously this is not going to help turn-out, not to mention the problem of spoilt ballot papers that arose in the 2007 Scottish AMS election. The public are not to blame. The difference between STV and AMS is practically the difference between a logical and an illogical system.

This is not merely my personal conclusion but more or less the consensus of a string of official reports, the Kilbrandon, Kerley, Sunderland, Richard, Arbuthnott, Tyler, the Councillors and (Helena Kennedy) Power reports.

Not to forget the secret history of the Jenkins commission. The Ashdown diaries, 1997-9, reveal that Jenkins confided that the then Premier, Tony Blair would not give us STV. Hence the Jenkins commissions indigestible concoction of an AV Top-up system. Why do you think Jenkins called Blair "a second-rate intellect," at the time?

Government asked some of the above-mentioned commissions to consider AV+, which they gave short shrift.

Second recommendation:

Democratic principle urges the use of STV for all official elections. A countrys election law shouldn't be a miscellany of incompetent voting rigs for the benefit of political incumbents. It would be helpful to a nations well-being if the public could be confident the politicians knew what they were doing.

3) Trustworthy politics.

[To top](#)

My third recommendation generalises from the second. Namely that a principled conduct of politics is necessary to win the respect of the voters and their re-engagement. Going round the country, the Power commission found how lacking that was.

"Robson rotation" is a case in point. This randomises the order of candidate names on the ballot paper, so surnames beginning with letters early in the alfabet dont benefit from listing in alfabetic order. Once educated in statistics and research methods, as part of a social science degree, I recognise this as a means to get rid of the noise or random fluctuations, in data, distorting the meaning of the voters electoral message. Academics recognise that if they don't take such factors into account, they will be criticised by their colleagues for slip-shod research.

All too often in politics, anything goes, perhaps because politicians are a law to themselves. In this respect, a written constitution on clearly democratic principles can serve as a basis of national purpose.

The law makes cases sub judice, to prevent the verdict being drowned out by prejudice. Yet in the court of public opinion, this abuse is all too often what happens from people in privileged positions in the mass media, without the balanced debate required

by a US style Fairness Doctrine (before President Reagan abolished it).

The Alternative Vote referendum was a national disgrace. Apart from the fact that a referendum, for a voting system that not even reformers really wanted, should never have been held, I have no quarrel with the result. The crowing victors got what they deserved. But it was conducted in complete disregard for the truth. Short of the ritual civil war turning into a real one, it was politics as barbarism.

AV does not "bring in fascism" as The Sun said, on the back of Baroness Warsi. Australia, whatever its faults may be, is not a fascist country, nor is it going to get rid of AV, as a No campaign leaflet baselessly claimed. Nor does the alternative vote give more votes to some (potentially extremist) voters than others.

The No to AV campaign, unlike the Yes to AV campaign, didn't allow discussion on its website. That tells you all you need to know about the relative honesty of the two sides of the argument. The No campaign had too much to hide.

On television, John Reid recoiled from the alternative vote as "un-British" while David Cameron stood in the wings with a frown of disapproval, presumably of this un-British system of alternative voting that essentially elected him as Tory leader.

Politicians conducting a debate, at this nonsense level, are also pushing thru, on the nod, planetary life-threatening decisions, such as the renewal of trident nuclear weapons, and its hyper-polluting spin-off and accessory, (uranium fission) nuclear power stations.

British politics appears to be about where science was when an academic told Galileo, he had no need to take any notice of his observations, because Aristotle was the authority on those things.

Aristotle was a renowned scientist, if not always to be taken on trust. Not authority, as in the guise of John Reid and David Cameron, but a self-discipline, as imposed by recognised rules of scientific method, is the arbiter of decisions.

Science progressed when scholastic reasoning, up in the air, was brought down to earth, by a proper regard for evidence. In politics, progress depends on a proper regard for democracy. No-one can know everything. That is why top-down politics fails, being oligarchic. But everyone knows something, so democracy is the engine of scientific progress. HG Wells celebrated this "democracy of science," in the profession itself, by initiating a Charter of Scientific Fellowship, as well as the Sankey Declaration of Human Rights.

Third recommendation:

A new contract between rulers and ruled (as in a Scottish constitution) of honest politics, such as in observing scientific standards of evidence, without theoretical presumption or experimental ambiguity; due process of law without prejudice, and the media abiding by a Fairness Doctrine.

Finally, a vibrant local politics, mindful of the national interest will be handicapped for lack of power to assert itself thru effective voting method. So the three recommendations, which do not claim to be exhaustive, depend upon each other to be realised. The new broom will have to be broad.

Further references:

John Stuart Mill MP speeches on Parliamentary Reform for the classic case of democracy as peace-making power sharing, thru "Mr Hare's system." Mill would have accepted as second best, a reduction in constituency sizes from a national constituency.

HG Wells: A Charter of Scientific Fellowship is also on my website, as is the Sankey declaration. And there is a bibliography with discussion of his writings on electoral reform: World peace thru democracy. HG Wells neglected third phase.

[The above Mill and Wells references are also in my sequel book, Scientific Method of Elections.]

Wells is forthright, for example, in 1918 (In The Fourth Year) with regard to the sabotaging of STV/PR, which had been part of the 1916 Speakers Conference compromise deal: "British political life resists cleansing with all the vigour of a dirty little boy." He starts as he means to go on. A historic denunciation.

JFS Ross, Elections and Electors, also deals with this in the chapters on the Speakers Conferences.

*(May 2014
with minor amendments)*

[To top](#)

Simple examples of how to conduct an election by the single transferable vote.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Links to sections:

Learning By Doing the democratic voting method: Thomas Wright Hill intuitive transferable voting.

[Irish-style elections.](#)

The next sections follow the steps to proportional representation, using the Senatorial Rules of transferable voting:

[The preference vote.](#)

[The proportional count.](#)

[The stages](#) of counting transferable votes.

The Droop [quota](#): a foot-note.

Learning By Doing the democratic voting method: Thomas Wright Hill intuitive transferable voting.

I realised that scientific method could solve the problem of voting method. Such a formal approach may only appeal to specialists and not the general public. As a student, who hadn't yet voted, I thought there was nothing to know about voting, apart from placing an X. Beginners don't know they are beginners, and are not happy about finding it out. Perhaps, the best way to begin with them is at the beginning of electoral reform.

John Dewey sloganized educational reform for "Learning By Doing," because that was much more effective than cramming children with academic abstractions.

In 1821, Thomas Wright Hill suggested the principle of proportional representation as it was informally practised in his boys school. To quote Enid Lakeman, in *How Democracies Vote*:

"...his pupils were asked to elect a committee by standing beside the boy they liked best. This first produced a number of unequal groups, but soon the boys in the largest groups came to the conclusion that not all of them were actually necessary for the election of their favourite and some moved on to help another candidate, while on the other hand the few supporters of an unpopular boy gave him up as hopeless and transferred themselves to the candidate they considered the next best.

The final result was that a number of candidates equal to the number required for the committee were each surrounded by the same number of supporters, with only two or three boys left over who were dissatisfied with all those elected.

This is an admirable example of the use of STV."

It is useful to know that some candidate is a clear favorite, because he may be made the chairman. Other posts on the committee may go to those next most favored with more votes than they needed to be elected.

Hill realised the essential idea of transferring surpluses from those who have more to those who have less than they need. He may have re-discovered the moral to the Gospel incident of the loaves and the fishes. Jesus had his disciples go round an audience to gather the left-overs for those who had still not been fed.

Thomas Hill original proportional representation, by transferable voting, is still the best way to grasp the principle. Its virtue is that it is genuinely democratic. No-one tells the boys who to support. No masters or prefects draw up "party lists" to draft the boys into school "houses" or teams or whatever.

The beauty of Hill election is that the voters know intuitively how it works. Strictly speaking, nobody has to do any arithmetic. No ballot papers have to be filled: A voter doesn't have to note down the order of preference for candidates, merely move from one candidate queue to the next. If he or she stood by the school favorite, who didn't need the support, a voter might move, in the second place (number 2), say, to a candidate, who had helped her with her problems.

If this second choice also exceeded the share of votes needed for a committee seat, the voter in question perhaps finds that by moving on a third time (number 3 on a ballot paper) she helps a personal friend to just reach the portion of votes to ensure a seat, and so stays in the queue of her third choice.

So, this informal election does not require voters to be numerate. They don't have to count up to three or five or twelve. But by moving on, or transferring themselves, as surplus voters, from one candidate's queue to another, they are just as surely expressing an order of preference, by voting with their feet.

Also, a returning officer, vital to a formal election, is not needed. No one has to do sums to show a candidate has over half the voters needed to win a single seat. If 16 children line up behind one of their two favorites, and one queue is 9 children long and the other 7, you know that the candidate with two extra kids has won. You don't have to count the two rows.

If both rows are the same length (8 kids each) then lots are drawn or you toss a coin to decide which candidate wins.

If there are two seats, the winners need one-third of the votes each. Suppose there are 24 voters. Provided two of the candidates both collect rows of 8 children behind them, they cannot be beaten by any other candidate. It is just possible that a third candidate may muster the remaining 8 children.

This would be an unusual alignment. Probably, it would be evident, which of the three candidates was a home of last resort, by having his queue of 8 completed last.

If not, one of the three tied candidates, who drew the short straw, would step down.

Electing a committee of three, we follow on from the above examples of single-seat and double-seat elections. The three winning candidates, who have one-quarter of the votes each, cannot be beaten. Again, the winning proportion (or the "quota") is 8 votes each, if there are 32 voters, this time.

A four-way tie is very unlikely. *Any* tie is more unlikely in an informal election than a formal one. Because, the voters, themselves, seeing a tie, are likely to break ranks just enough to provide the tie-break.

A formal election, following rigid rules, lacks the informal elections flexible ability to modify the result, under circumstances that could persuade some voters to revise their decisions.

Nor does it matter if three rows of 9 children form to ensure the three most popular candidates elected. All that means is the winning candidates have surpassed the lowest hurdle of popularity, of just 8 votes each, needed for election - and which ensures the minimal proportional representation of three quarters (or $3 \times 8 = 24$ out of 32) of the voters.

Remember, I have to describe this informal election to you, in terms of arithmetic, but the children elect three candidates in terms of the three longest queues.

This is no doubt a sophisticated process, involving subtle judgments of the characters of their school fellows, but it is not formal arithmetic. Such powers of mental arithmetic, that individuals may bring to their aid, avoid the tedium of working with abstract numbers. The children *are* the numbers. They perform a collective calculation by the operations of moving about between the candidates.

The American civic organisation Democracy 2000 conducted decision-making workshops both in schools and town halls. They found that citizens don't take to the formal arithmetic of transferable voting that the returning officer has to do. For beginners, I recommend Thomas Hill method to show a small group, in practise, the principle of democratic elections.

Irish-style elections.

[To top.](#)

On a large scale, these elections have to be organised on formal lines, with ballot papers and a results sheet, recording the stages of the count - even if the whole process is automated. With this in mind, I've also recommended this traditional Eire version of single transferable vote.

It allowed the formal electoral procedure of transferable voting to be seen in terms of individual voters (according to their orders of choice) allocated to individual representatives making community decisions.

Democracy has been so abstracted and removed from everyday concerns that any number of bad systems are used to the discredit of its name. And few people seem any the wiser.

Modellers of group decision-making, like Democracy 2000, require the voter to be represented by a legislator of his or her choice. They found the Senatorial rules of surplus vote transfer (a more advanced form of STV, explained below in succeeding sections) hard to explain to American audiences.

(Many people don't have a head for figures or have a phobia of them.)

The senatorial rules are consistent with one person, one vote (and one vote one value). But demonstration elections may want to steer clear of the ambiguity of voters as more or less represented by their range of preferences.

The Irish system of STV (essentially the system used in Cambridge, Massachusetts local government may be roughly adapted for

audience interaction.

This account also serves as an attempt to show that STV can be fairly simply explained.

We suppose the local public invited to an informal meeting, so ballot papers or machines are optional. But for the election of any given committee, the audience need to know how many seats there are, and how many people it takes to elect each representative.

For this purpose, it is explained how the Droop quota follows from the single majority system. Half the voters can elect one candidate. (If two candidates each got 50 out of 100 votes, that would be a tie break and they'd have to draw straws.)

Following from that, two seats can be won by candidates who have each won one third the votes. (For example, when two candidates have each got 34 votes out of 100, there are only 32 votes left and no remaining candidate can win a seat with less than the required proportion of one-third the votes.) Likewise three committee seats are won when three candidates have each reached the quota of one-quarter the votes. And so on.

Alright, we assume your audience have got to know the candidates and they each gather round their most preferred candidate. Usually, some candidates will be more popular than others. Say, there are half a dozen candidates competing for three seats. With 100 voters, election depends on winning one quarter of the votes or 25 votes.

But the most popular candidate may have 40 people around her, who like her best.

She doesn't need 15 of those votes to elect her as the "best" candidate. Those 15 votes are wasted unless they help elect their next best choice.

Irish republic elections would pick 15 of the 40 at random, so they

are a representative sample of all the voters who gave their first preferences to the leading lady.

(This Irish method is a statistical approximation of the Senatorial rules - explained in a later section. There's no need for your leading lady's all 40 first preference voters to know that the transfer value of their second preferences are $15/40$ or $3/8$ of a vote each.)

To cut a long story short, say those 15 votes go to a candidate with 10 voters around him. He also is elected with 25 votes. We'll assume another candidate got just 25 votes and all three seats are taken. However, I want to point out that this method of surplus transfer by representative sample gives the one-to-one relations between voters and representatives, that civic groups, like Democracy 2000, require for their democratic workshops.

Note that the method of transferring votes by representative sample also preserves the basic principle of one person one vote.

Though not necessary for their voting audience, the organisers, as part of their studies, would record the stages of the count - just like returning officers in full-scale Irish general elections - which are keenly followed by the public, who voted in two referendums to keep STV, or "choice voting," as it's often called in America.

The next sections follow the steps to proportional representation, using the Senatorial Rules of transferable voting.

The Preference Vote.

[To top](#)

The candidates names are printed in random order on the voting papers. Each candidate may label what they stand for. If the election is political, this may be a party label or Independent. The electorate has a preference vote. Each voter may state their order of choice for the candidates, by placing the number 1 by the candidates name of their first choice, number 2 by their second choice, number 3 by their third choice, and so on, in order of preference, insofar as a given voter pleases.

With the STV method, latter preferences do *not* count against former preferences. A 3rd choice will *not* weaken the chances of a 2nd choice, nor a 2nd choice weaken the chances of a 1st choice.

With STV, the voter does *not have to* vote only for candidates of the same party. The voter may prefer candidates of one party - or candidates of two or three parties, perhaps to express a wish they form a coalition. The voter may prefer among candidates of one party or of several parties, and among Independents.

In fact, the voter may state *any* order of preference between all the candidates on the voting paper. But it is *not* compulsory to number-order all the candidates.

The Proportional Count

[To top](#)

It should be stressed that numbered ordering ones choice of candidates is all the voters need to know about the transferable voting method of election. Every kind of election is in two phases. First, the actual voting and second, the count of the votes. The count is conducted by trained personnel.

The Electoral Reform Society Of Great Britain and Ireland has a rule book, by Frank Britton and Robert Newland, to cover every eventuality in the procedure of an STV count and generally organise a parliamentary election down to the last detail. For a long time, they have known about an extremely thoro program for computing transferable votes.

They, or their veteran sister society, the Proportional Representation Society of Australia may help with specialised enquiries.

Organisations may obtain, from the PRSA, a program for computer counting STV, which they also call the quota-preferential method.

The following information should be enough to elect your own interest group committee by STV, as millions of people already do. Have a calculator handy.

The count of the vote means that, first, the number of voting papers is added up, and each paper is checked to see it has been correctly filled in, with the preference numbers placed within the spaces provided by the candidate names.

If, for instance, the voter has made a mistake by missing out the number 3 but has placed numbers 1,2,4,5, then his voting intentions will only be counted valid for the first two preferences, 1 and 2. Any invalid voting papers are subtracted from the total vote, to give the total valid vote.

With STV, candidates each need to win a proportion or quota of the total votes before they are elected. This proportion is called, after its inventor, the Droop quota.

It is a rationalisation of the simple majority count, whereby one candidate needs just over half the votes to be elected in a single member constituency.

The Droop quota generalises this to say that in a two-member constituency, two candidates need just over one-third the votes each

to be elected. This gives a proportional representation of two times one-third or two-thirds of the total vote.

Three members are returned with one-quarter of the votes each, proportionally representing three-quarters of the voters. And so on. Therefore, in a 7-member constituency, the PR is 7/8 of the voters.

As a simple example, take a club of 32 voters, who wish to elect a committee of 3. (A good tip is always to have an odd number of committee members to avoid possible stalemates.) Advisedly, the elective quota is simply one-fourth of 32 votes, which equals 8 votes.

(Round-up small fractional quotas, e.g. $35/(5+1) = 5.84$, rounded-up to two decimal places.)

The stages of counting transferable voting

[To top](#)

Suppose there are 5 candidates, called A,B,C,D and E. Having counted 32 valid votes, the returning officer then counts how many first preferences each of the 5 candidates have. It is standard practise to openly tabulate the stages of the STV count. So, what you have is a board raised to public view. On top, the quota, $32/(3+1) = 8$, should be noted.

The far left side column randomly lists the candidate names. The stages of the count are recorded in successive columns.

Firstly, the number of first preferences for each candidate are written in the column beside their names. Say, candidate D has 2 first preferences, A has 5, E has 6, C has 12 and B has 7.

(By way of cross-checking, all these first preferences are totted-up. In fact, each successive stage of the count must cross-check with the total votes as originally counted. So, the number of voters ceasing to express a preference must also be noted at the foot of the relevant column.)

Since C has 12 votes, he or she is declared elected with 12, minus the quota of 8 votes, leaving a surplus of 4 votes. With STV, this surplus vote is not wasted.

All the most preferred candidate voters have an equal right to decide how that candidate's surplus vote is transferred or re-distributed to second preferences, so *all* the elected candidate's votes are transferred in proportion to the size of the surplus vote for candidate C.

The 12 transferable votes from candidate C only have a surplus value of 4 votes above the elective quota of 8 votes. Therefore, the value of these 12 transferable votes counts for only $4/12$ or $1/3$ of a vote each.

The rule for weighting the count of the transferable votes is: transferable votes minus quota equals surplus, and the surplus is divided by the transferable votes.

(This is Gregory's method or the Senatorial Rules, named after the use of STV in various Commonwealth senates.)

Say, 4 of the 12 transferable votes give their second preferences to D. As each transferable vote is worth $1/3$ of a vote, D gains by 4 times $1/3$ equals $4/3$ votes. Say, 5 of the second preferences go to A, who gets an extra $5/3$ votes.

Neither D nor A have yet reached the quota of 8 votes to elect them. Suppose B gets the remaining 3 out of 12 second preferences, worth

3/3 or 1 vote. Since we've said B got 7 first preferences, that transfer value of 1 vote is just enough to elect B.

B has no surplus vote to transfer, and there are no other elected candidates. With no more surplus votes to transfer, candidate D, with the least votes, is excluded. His 3 1/3 votes are transferred to their next preferences.

Say, E, with 6 votes, picks up 2 1/3 of D candidate votes, to be elected to the third and last seat on the committee. This leaves A with 6 2/3 plus, at most, 1 of D votes.

Had E not won by 1/3 of a vote above the quota, E and A might have tied for third place, with 8 votes each. Then they would have to draw straws or toss a coin for third place, just as when two candidates for a single seat get exactly half the votes each.

Sample STV Count Quota = $32/(3 + 1) = 8$.

Candidates	1st stage	2nd stage	ctd.	3rd stage	ctd.
	1st preferences: C elected	Transfer of C's surplus at $4/12 = 1/3$	B elected	Elimination of D	E elected
D	2	4/3	3 1/3		
A	5	5/3	6 2/3	1	7 2/3
E	6		6	2 1/3	8 1/3
C	12		8		8
B	7	3/3	8		8
total valid vote:	32		32		32

The Droop quota: a foot-note

[To top](#)

For many years, the Electoral Reform Society would add one vote to the Droop quota. So, the elective quota for one seat, given 100 voters, would be: $\{100/(1+1)\} + 1 = 51$ votes.

Now they don't bother. Because, if two candidates tie with 50 votes each, which candidate takes the one seat is not an elective decision. They have to draw lots.

Similarly, if the three leading candidates in a contest each won 33 out of a total 99 votes, the candidate of these three, who drew the short straw, would have to stand down.

So, the correct formula for the Droop quota is: $(\text{votes})/(\text{seats plus one})$. That is: $v/(s+1)$.

Altho most textbooks define the Droop quota as total votes divided by one more than the number of seats, followed by a "plus one vote," you can forget about the "plus one vote."

For electorates of more than 100 voters, it doesn't matter which version of the formula you use. But for small numbers of voters, the "plus one vote" may prevent enough candidates gaining their full quota, to take all the seats. (Nor need one add a small fraction of a vote, tho one must round-up rather than round-down a quota.)

[To top](#)

Modèle Scientifique du Procès Electoral.

[Chez nous.](#)

Contenu:

Introduction.

[Une mesure](#) de représentation:

L'échelle nominale: le vote "X."

L'échelle ordinale : le vote alternatif.

L'échelle à intervalles (supposée): La méthode de Borda.

L'échelle Intervalle (réelle): Les Règles Sénatoriales.

Le rapport de l'échelle: La quote-part Droop.

[La théorie et l'expérience](#) du modèle de mesure ST (ou STV).

Les [systèmes partisans.](#)

Le système de [membres additionels: SMA](#)

"Le [Double Vote.](#)" ou SMA (liste de parti).

[La votation de parti](#) dans les comités et pour les "premiers à l'arrivée."

[Le pouvoir explicatif](#) du scrutin transférable (ST).

Introduction.

La définition de la démocratie électorale est la représentation d'un individu dans la communauté. Examinons quelques-uns des modèles qui nous sont disponibles.

La modèle classique de la démocratie dans l'état-cité on chaque individu devait servir comme son propre représentant est un exemple d'un modèle à grande échelle (dans le rapport 1 à 1) sur une échelle dont on se servirait pour mesurer les démocraties électorales. A l'autre bout de cette échelle se trouve l'exemple où le président est choisi pour représenter la communauté entière, un individu capable d'une action indivisée, et donc, naturellement la tête d'un exécutif.

Entre ces deux extrêmes les assemblées représentatives à des niveaux locales, regionales, nationaux on ceux d'un gouvernement fédéral nous offrent d'autres modèles de démocratie qui fonctionnent, pourvu que les élections elles-mêmes soient une représentation effective des vœux des peuples.

Cet article considère les divers modèles disponibles pour mettre en oeuvre l'efficacité d'une représentation pareille.

Une mesure de représentation

[à l'haut.](#)

L'échelle nominale: le vote "X."

On pourrait considérer le problème de la représentation comme va problème scientifique de mesure. Pour cela, il y a à notre disposition quatre échelles possibles pour mesurer la représentation.

L'échelle classifiée ou nominale, l'échelle ordinale, l'échelle à intervalles, et l'échelle à raison.

On pourrait dire que le suffrage universel avec un seul vote pour chaque électeur représente nominalement le corps électoral entier. Mais puisqu'on devrait permettre à un vote, ainsi qu'à un désir, la possibilité de se réaliser, le "X" (ou la tache qui marque le vote "X") ne fait rien que garantir une majorité démocratique décisive de plus de la moitié des votants pour un des deux candidats, le choix minimum possible, montrant ainsi qu' "élir" veut dire littéralement "choisir." Ce qui accorde une seule préférence en faveur d'un seul candidat est la plus simple et la plus limitée des élections.

L'échelle ordinale : le vote alternatif.

Lorsqu'on aspire à un vote plus étendu que celui entre deux candidats, le vote "X" nous pose devant un dilemme; ou bien il faut renoncer au vote de première préférence en votant discrètement pour le moins désagréable des deux principaux contestants ou bien il faut voir notre vote partagé.

La méthode scientifique exige que nous comprenions dans une expérience un contrôle analytique des contingences pour que celles-ci à obscurcissent pas la loi d'une majorité compréhensive des résultats expérimentaux. Le but de notre contrôle, dans un traitement scientifique de ce procédé de voter, est l'importance relative de l'influence des divers candidats sur la détermination d'une majorité démocratique.

Le suffrage électoral démocratique est, en effet, l'équivalent du contrôle expérimental du savant. L'échelle ordinale exempte le public, de la contrainte d'enregistrer une seule préférence, en fournissant une capacité plus étendue de mesure par moyen d'un vote qui comprend une multiplicité de préférences pour des candidats (où l'ordre du choix est numéroté 1, 2, 3, etc). Cela s'appelle généralement "voter par ordre de préférence."

En France, cette échelle ordinale réduit le second scrutin et ceux qui suivent à une série d'étages dans un dépouillement qui élimine les candidats gagnant les moindres votes par ordre de préférence et repartit de nouveau les préférences suivantes jusqu'à ce qu'un des candidats qui restent gagne une majorité absolue. Churchill appelant cela "les pires votes pour les pires candidats."

L'échelle à intervalles (supposée): La méthode de Borda.

Dissemblable au dépouillement simplement éliminatoire, il est possible d'employer de toutes les informations fournies par les votes par ordre de préférence, traitant toutes les préférences de quelque manière étalon mathématique.

Un tel traitement, appelé la méthode Borda, (1770) assigne un "poids" à chaque préférence donnée ayant rapport à son ordre d'importance. Cela se fait en se servant des séries harmoniques $1/1$, $1/2$, $1/3$ etc pour les premières, secondes, troisièmes etc préférences respectivement.

Il est peu probable que l'intensité du sentiment des voteurs pour les candidats se relâche à vrai dire précisément à ces voteurs. Mais, il est probable que la série arithmétique accentue trop et que la série géométrique n'accentue pas assez les préférences ultérieures à mesure que le nombre de candidats augmente.

L'échelle Intervalle (réelle): Les Règles Sénatoriales.

Un autre traitement, des informations tirées des préférences, assigne une valeur numérique aux préférences en forme des "poids" des intervalles, comme, par exemple, lorsqu'on tient compte du nombre d'articles dans chaque catégorie d'un ordre arrangé en tableaux de données statistiques pour arriver à une moyenne rationnelle.

Cette approche, connue sous le nom de La méthode de Gregory (1880) ou dans les pays du Commonwealth, "Les règles sénatoriales," déclare que le nombre de votes pour un candidat qui gagne juste le nombre qu'il en faut pour l'élir (premier à l'arrivée) est un surplus de votes autrement superflus. Et puisque tous aux, qui ont voté pour le candidat élu, ont également le droit de partager à ce surplus transférable, leurs préférences suivantes reçoivent un "poids" convenable.

Ce que devrait être ce "poids" est mieux expliqué par l'exemple suivant. Supposé qu' un candidat ait besoin de cinquante-et-un votes, pour être élu, mais qu' en effet il en a reçu soixante-huit -- surplus de dix-sept votes. Puisque ce traitement considère que tous les soixante-huit sont transférables à la prochaine préférence du voteur, la question se pose du "poids" convenable qu' il faut employer dans ce transfert, c'est à dire la soi-disant valeur de transfert des votes.

La règle déclare que la division du nombre de votes en surplus, par le nombre total des votes, vous donne le facteur du "poids," c-à-d $17/68$. Ainsi, chacun des 68 votes est puissant pour des raisons de transfert par $17/68$; ou bien on pourrait dire qu' ils ont chacun une valeur de transfert d'un quart de vote.

Churchill aurait pu observer qu' une telle votation transférable veut dire "les meilleurs votes pour les meilleurs candidats" tirés d'un bon choix dans des collèges multi-membres.

Le rapport de l'échelle: La quote-part Droop.

Ce que Churchill a dit en effet était qu' il préférerait être un cinquième des représentants de la cité entière de Leeds que d'être un seul représentant d'un cinquième de Leeds.

Celle représentation proportionale fonctionne sur une progression d'un candidat élu seulement lorsqu' il a gagné une majorité décisive

de plus de la moitié des votes.

Deux candidats peuvent être élus sur des quotes-parts d'un peu plus d'un tiers des votes chacun, pour une représentation proportionnelle (RP) de deux tiers des votes dans le collège électoral.

Trois sièges ont des quotes-parts électives d'un peu plus d'un quart des votes chacun, représentant proportionnellement trois quarts des voteurs. Et ainsi de suite.

Cette rationalisation de la représentation est connue sous le nom du "quote-part Droop" (1869). Les votes, en surplus d'une quote-part, sont transférables selon les règles sénatoriales. Alors, les votes pour les candidats moins heureux, qui seraient autrement perdus, sont transférés à leurs prochaines préférences, pour compléter les quotes-parts, parmi les candidats qui se font toujours concurrence pour les sièges qui restent dans le collège électoral.

Les quatre règles de mesure généralement acceptées, comme elles sont représentées dans une progression logique, par: (1) un vote par personne (2) de préférence (3) transférables en tant que surplus et que déficits de (4) quote-part Droop, font ensemble un système électoral appelé le scrutin transférable (ST; en anglais, "STV: single transferable vote") qui est, par conséquent, un modèle électoral de mesure.

La théorie et l'expérience du modèle de mesure ST (ou STV).

[à l'haut.](#)

La majorité d'un membre est, par exemple, au moins 51 votes sur 100. Mais deux votes de 51 chacun sur 150 constitueraient les majorités de deux membres, puisque nul autre candidat ne pourrait avoir plus de 48 votes. 51 votes à chacun sur 200 votes élisent trois membres avec des majorités sur n'importe quel autre candidat. Et ainsi de suite.

Le dépouillement majoritaire d'un seul membre est généralisé sous le concept d'un dépouillement majoritaire multi-membres, ce qui comporte plus de représentation pour les groupes d'opinion d'une importance relativement majeure dans l'électorat.

Les majorités sont relatives et le choix est relatif, en ce que nous favorisons quelques candidats par rapport à des autres.

Albert Einstein (*Ideas and Opinions*) préférant la Relativité, comme théorie principale, faisant des déductions logiques sur une base ferme et empirique, que le mouvement est relatif à un système co-ordonnée. Le ST (ou STV) est un système co-ordonné du vote au dépouillement, dans un ordre de préférence empirique 1, 2, 3,.. à l'ordre rationnel de 1, 2, 3,.. membres majoritaires. Il est axiomatique à la théorie des élections que le dépouillement doit être conforme au vote.

Le scrutin transférable est une généralisation théoriquement compatible avec un vote d'une seule préférence pour un dépouillement d'un membre majoritaire au vote multi-préférences pour un dépouillement des multi-membres majoritaires.

Le système d'un seul membre majoritaire est un vote nominale par personne avec un dépouillement à intervalles (premier à l'arrivée). Le scrutin transférable est un modèle pour l'échelle ordinale en qualité de contrôle expérimental pour l'échelle nominale, et l'échelle à raison en contrôle pour l'échelle à intervalles.

Car, l'expérience électorale, ou bien l'épreuve du choix public, demande à la fois un vote de préférence pour contrôler le choix relatif et une quote-part pour contrôler les majorités relatives. Harré caractérise la construction de modèles par son adaptation graduelle à la réalité, en ce cas, la réalité d'une relativité générale de choix.

Les systèmes partisans.

[à l'haut.](#)

D'autres méthodes de votation ont une tendance à faire un absolu des divisions entre les partis (politiques) au dépens de la représentation individuelle et l'unité de la communauté.

David Hume and Karl Popper diraient que la votation par corps constitué pour un "parti," sans référence empirique bien déterminé à des individus, est "métaphysique" ou bien "au dehors du royaume du discours scientifique," parce que les partis politiques n'existent pas à part leurs membres individuels.

C'est l'identité, logiquement fausse, d'un membre avec sa classe, puisque pour un candidat qui est membre d'un parti politique voter ne comporte pas nécessairement son appui absolu (sans conditions) pour (quelqu' autre candidat dans) son parti.

Le résultat se trouve dans les sophisms des manuels qui supposent vrai ce qui est en question dans le sectarisme -- par exemple: pour un "argument circulaire;" de la "conclusion prévue;" par une "attribution injustifiée d'opinion;" qui "nie antécédent" du choix individuel; avec des "termes ambigus" de votation, pour la valeur personnelle d'un candidat ou pour aider son parti à former un gouvernement.

La théorie ne doit pas présumer ce qu'on essaie de prouver, ce qui est le Rationalisme, et l'expérience ne doit permettre aucune ambiguïté dans le résultat, ce qui l'Empirisme. Le système d'un membre unique est empiriste, puisque les principes sont trop vagues, au point même où ils cherchent des faits sans savoir pourquoi.

Des millions de votes sont inutiles, lorsqu' il y a des surplus superflus d'une quote-part implicite, parce que le "premier à l'arrivée" n'est pas un dépouillement rationnel. Le principe de collèges électoraux égaux, pour établir la représentation égale, que demande

le suffrage universel, est la forme la plus limitée de la représentation proportionnelle, c'est à dire, entre collèges où il n'y a qu'un seul membre.

Il n'y a aucune raison logique pour la quelle le principe de votes égaux s'arrête à ce point particulier de sa réalisation.

Mais un dogmatisme "a priori" ou un Rationalisme "avant les faits" est critiqué parce qu'il considère ses assumptions comme admises. Les scrutins de recherches révèlent une diminution de la popularité des partis politiques.

Le système de membres additionnels: SMA (ou AMS: additional member system).

[à l'haut.](#)

SMA ne remplit pas les conditions exigées par Basson et O'Connor (*Symbolic Logic*) qu'un système théorique ait des séries d'axiomes et de dérivations en conformité les unes avec les autres.

La représentation proportionnelle implique des collèges à multi-membres. Au lieu de cela, des membres additionnels ad hoc sont censés donner de la proportion à un système à membre unique, ce qui ne réussit pas à établir ni l'un ni l'autre.

En vérité, SMA aurait besoin de 12 collèges britanniques multi-membres, d'où la somme totale des votes des partis, dans chaque région, déciderait si elles avaient, ou non, le droit de membres additionnels, parmi les candidats les plus heureux, second ou troisième "à l'arrivée," dans les collèges des membres "uniques"(!)

Les membres additionnels ne seraient pas en représentation proportionnelle avec les "premiers à l'arrivée'." Et les collèges, ayant des membres additionnels, seraient représentés d'une façon disproportionnée avec ceux qui n'en auraient pas.

En effet, SMA serait presque douze fois plus "éloigné" que les quelques 142 collèges multi-membres rédigés pour le scrutin transférable, en Angleterre.

SMA serait moins "éloigné" dans sa limitation du choix qui déciderait quel parti politique aurait un représentant unique dans un collège électoral et, par conséquent, un monopole d'influence.

SMA s'accorde avec le critérium de Carl Hempel (*Philosophy of Natural Science*) d'une hypothèse "ad hoc" rien que pour préserver quelque conception courante contre de l'évidence adverse, en ce cas sans augmenter nos connaissances de l'opinion publique, et sans fournir une épreuve nouvelle et plus distinctive du choix personnel.

"Le Double Vote" ou SMA (liste de parti).

[à l'haut.](#)

Mis à l'épreuve, "Le Double Vote" ne réussit pas de même que SMA ne réussit pas théoriquement. En 1953, L'Allemagne de l'Ouest essayèrent des élections plus analytiques. Ils publièrent des listes de partis des membres additionels, avec un second vote "X" pour le choix du parti, pour libérer le premier vote X, dans les collèges aux membres uniques, en vote personnel.

Pourtant, les conditions d'épreuve contrôlées se contrarient toujours. Un premier vote personnel ne tient aucun complot des considérations de parti, tandis que le choix personnel des votes de parti n'est pas reconnu, puisque la comité exige que l'élection soit faite du haut jusqu' en bas, dans la mesure que le total vote de parti leur accorde plus de sièges qu'ils n'ont déjà gagnés dans les collèges aux membres uniques.

SMA ou le double vote réduisant en fragments les collèges britanniques (ou français) en réduisant leur nombre, pour faire place à des membres (additionnels) de liste, dans les chambres du Parlement.

Chaque comité locale réformé préempterait, dans une large mesure, l'élection, par la réélection d'un seul candidat, pour moins collèges du membre unique.

Mais ST (le scrutin transférable) pourrait convenablement faire joindre les collèges à membre unique pour en former des collèges multi-membres, sans qu'aucun membre doire retirer sa candidature, jusqu' à ce qu'ils soient vaincus dans une élection générale.

Lorsqu' il y a des mouvements de population, il n' y a pas besoin de faire des changements de bornes, il faut seulement rajuster le nombre de sièges dans le collège.

Par conséquent, le scrutin transférable est une meilleure théorie, puisqu' elle est une mesure des faits plus convenables et plus exactes.

La votation de parti dans les comités et pour les "premiers à l'arrivée."

[à l'haut.](#)

Les instructions électorales pour une liste de parti se rédivisent à cela: vous avez un vote pour une liste de parti; vous pouvez placer votre vote contre un seul candidat sur cette liste; par consequent, votre vote sert à élir n'importe quel candidat sur cette liste.

Cela est le faux raisonnement du 'majeur illicite' dans le syllogisme, où un terme majeure est employé illégitement dans la conclusion.

Quelque fois l'ordre général des préférences pour une liste de candidats est rédigé par une comité, plutôt que par le public en général. Où bien, chaque parti assigne sa part des sièges aux candidats "premiers à l'arrivée" sur les listes, sans se soucier du partage des votes.

Dans chacun de ces cas un vote de préférence "X" particulier, plutôt qu'un vote de préférence générale (1, 2, 3,...), ne réussit pas à donner l'explication générale que cherchent les sciences. Et cela aussi manque d'offrir le choix effectif que cherche la démocratie.

Tous les systèmes de sectarisme proportionnel se trouvent fort embarrassés par le choix de comité ou le vote partagé fortuit. Par exemple (en 1981), l'Israël et la Guyane se servent de liste préparées par une comité, tandis que la Finlande et la Suisse optent pour des majorités, sans "contrôle" scientifique, sur les listes. La Belgique favorise le système de l'Israël et de la Guyane, et les Pays Bas celui de la Suisse. L'Italie et le Luxembourg permettent au public d'être enfermé complètement dans le dilemme. Le Danemark aussi offre les deux options à un parti.

Les listes de parti fournissent un contrôle en dehors du parti pour maintenir la balance politique. Mais sans des conditions contrôlées de préférence proportionnelles intra-partis et à travers partis, l'importance relative des divisions entre les partis, dans le contexte de la mesure de l'unité nationale faite par la liberté individuelle, reste inconnu.

Voilà pourquoi la représentation par le scrutin transférable (ou "Super-vote") est un analyse supérieure.

Le pouvoir explicatif du scrutin transférable (ST).

[à l'haut.](#)

Les effets du ST sont:

(1) La représentation proportionnelle (*RP*) *entre les partis*.

(2) Un vote de préférence, entre plusieurs candidats, du même parti, qui se présentent dans un collège multi-membre, exécute soi-disant "*primaries*," en anglais.

(3) Le ST préfère quels partis forme une *coalition*, si nul parti ne gagne une majorité; et aussi le ST donne la stabilité politique d'un gouvernement majoritaire, décisif et populaire.

(4) *Référenda*, en préférant une série de candidats de partis différents, et certains Indépendants, lorsqu' il s'agit de questions qui sont d'une importance non-sectaire.

Le ST réglemente le degré d'indépendance ou d'unité de parti entre les candidats.

Ni le "premier à l'arrivée" ni le sectarisme proportionnel répond bien é ces conditions préalables pour les élections démocratiques. Les avantages du scrutin transférable se présentent en effet comme un modèle de représentation effective.

Tenant compte de tous ce points jetons un coup d'oeil sur quelques pays (en 1981):

Le système "premier à l'arrivée," dans l'USA, attaque la stabilité et l'égalité avec son parti unique au sud, ses truquages électoraux (soi-disant "gerrymandering," "affirmatif" ou non), et ses corruptions à la Tammany Hall, et comme suite.

ST ("STV") débarrassait la Grande-Bretagne de la domination de deux partis extrêmes.

La France aurait plus de flexibilité dans ces options à travers partis. Les Allemands pourraient préférer leurs propres coalitions. Et les Italiens et les Belges pourraient effectivement déterminer pour une période le caractère et l'aspect de leur gouvernement.

Le ST, avec les collèges multi-membres, pourrait dépasser les bornes de n'importe quelles divisions soit que celles-ci s'endureissent à cause de questions de race, de tribu, de sectarisme ou de classe.

Le ST pourrait aussi dépasser les bornes du sectarisme proportionnelle qui réduit les partis en fragments en Israël et dans les pays européens tel que les Pays Bas. La Suisse pourront donner une expression électorale, aussi bien qu' exécutif, a son unité.

Note from translator.

I have done this work in a great hurry and am being pressed to hand it over without careful checking and without typing. There are several phrases I have "coined" such as "listage" for "weighting" votes, and "le vote unique transférable." There must be a correct term for these. I am reluctant to hand it over but apparently speed is of extreme importance.

L. Brown, M.A., Dip. Ed.

(The article had to meet a deadline but was not used.
The correct French phrase for the single transferable vote is "le scrutin transférable," which I've substituted in the translation by Mr Brown. He initially employed "poids" for "weight," which I've retained, in inverted commas, as less misleading than "listage.")

Richard Lung.

Copyright © UNESCO. (1981)

à l'haut.

Notice of forthcoming sequel on voting method and electoral reform.

[To table of contents.](#)



"Scientific Method of Elections"

is the name of book two in the Democracy Science series.

The previous chapter in French is the earliest surviving version of the foundation of that sequel. I base voting method on a widely accepted logic of measurement, to be found in the sciences. This is supported by reflections on the philosophy of science.

The more familiar approach, of judging voting methods by (questionable) selections of basic rules or criteria, is critically examined.

This author is a researcher, as well as a reformer, and my innovations of Binomial STV and the Harmonic Mean quota are explained.

The second book has more emphasis on electoral research, to progress freedom thru knowledge.

Two great pioneers of electoral reform are well represented here, especially speeches (also letters) of John Stuart Mill on parliamentary reform (obtained from Hansard on-line). And there is commentary and bibliography of H G Wells on proportional representation (mainly).

Official reports of British commissions on election systems are assessed. These reports are of Plant, Jenkins, Kerley, Sunderland, Arbuthnott, Richard, and (Helena Kennedy) Power report

The work begins with a short history on the sheer difficulty of genuine electoral reform. The defeat of democracy is also a defeat for science. Freedom and knowledge depend on each other. Therein is the remedy.

guide to five volume collected verse by Richard Lung

[To table of contents.](#)

The Valesman.

*Published, 3 august 2014,
with ten per cent free sample, and available at Amazon [here](#).*

Dates and Dorothy.

*Published on 2nd september 2014.
And is available [here for the Kindle version](#).*

Also available from Smashwords [here](#), [in epub format](#)

He's a good dog. (He just doesnt like you to laf.)

*Published on 14 november 2014.
And is available from Amazon [here](#).*

In the meadow of night.

*Published on 26 january 2015.
And is available from Amazon [here](#).*

Radical!

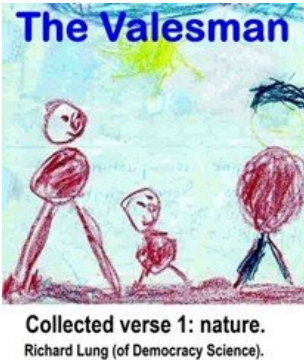
Published on 3 march 2015.

And is available from Amazon [here](#).

Also available from Smashwords in epub format [here](#).

If you read and enjoy any of these books of collected verse, please post on-line a review of why you liked the work.

While preparing this series, I made minor changes to arrangement and content of the material, so the descriptions of companion volumes, at the end of each book, might not always quite tally.



The Valesman

The first volume is mainly traditional nature poetry.
(160 poems, including longer narrative verse in section three.)
The nature poet Dorothy Cowlin re-connected me with my rural origins. Many of the poems, about animals and birds and the environs, could never have been written without her companionship.

The unity of themes, especially across the first two sections, as well as within the third section, makes this volume my most strongly constructed collection. I guess most people would think it my best. Moreover, there is something for all ages here.

1. How we lived for thousands of years.

Dorothy thought my best poems were those of the farming grandfather, the Valesman.

2. Flash-backs from the early train.

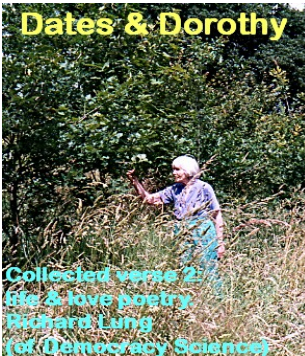
More memories of early childhood on the farm and first year at the village school.

3. Trickster.

Narrative verse about boyish pranks and prat-falls.

4. Oyh! Old Yorkshire Holidays.

Features playtime aspects of old rural and sea-side Yorkshire.



Dates and Dorothy

Book two begins with eight-chapter review of works, plus list of publications & prizes by Dorothy Cowlin.
(Seven of these chapters are currently freely available as web pages.)

This second volume continues with the second instalment of my own poems, classed as life and love poetry.

The Dates are historical and romantic plus the friendship of Dorothy and the romance of religion.

169 poems plus two short essays.

Prelude: review of Dorothy Cowlin.

Dates, historical and romantic, and Dorothy:

1. dates.
2. the Dorothy poems.

3. loves loneliness loves company.
4. the romance of religion.

The hidden influence of Dorothy, in the first volume, shows in this second volume. The first two sections were written mostly after she died. Thus, the first section, Dates, reads like a count-down before meeting her, in the second section, as prentice poet.

She was warmly responsive to the romantic lyrics of the third section. This was reassuring because some originated in my twenties. (I gave-up writing formal poetry during my thirties, to all practical purposes. There were only about three exceptions.) These surviving early poems, like most of my out-put, under-went intensive revision.

The fourth section probably stems from the importance attached to religion at primary school. Here humanitarian Dorothys influence only slightly made itself felt by her liking to visit churches.

The prelude review of Dorothy as a professional writer is freely available, at present, on my website: Poetry and novels of Dorothy Cowlin.

Nearly all the text is there, except a preface and last section, which I didnt up-load before losing access to the site in 2007.

The fotos, I took of Dorothy, are published for the first time.

The continued availability of my Dorothy Cowlin website is not guaranteed, so I welcome this opportunity to publish my literary review of her work, as an extra to volume 2.



He's a good dog. (He just doesn't like you to laf.)

The third book is a miscellaneous collection of 163 poems/pieces, with the arts and politics the strongest themes, as well as themes found in the companion books. There is also a story in section one, and a final short essay.

1. with children
2. or animals
3. never act
4. the political malaise
5. the lost
6. short essay:

Proportional Representation for peace-making power-sharing.

"A boot boy in the Great War," in the first section, is a sort of verse novela and dramatic poem with an eye on the centenary of the First World War. The idea stemmed from an incident related by Dorothy Cowlin (yet again). Her uncle was stopped flying a kite on the beach, because he might be signaling to the enemy battle fleet.
No kidding!

In this miscellany, previous themes appear, such as children, animals and birds. Verse on the arts comes in. I've organised these poems on the WC Fields principle: Never act with children or animals.

The fourth section collects political satires from over the years. The fifth section reflects on loneliness.

This volume is classed as of "presentatives" because largely about politics and the arts, with politicians acting like performing artists or representatives degenerating into presentatives on behalf of the few rather than the many.

However, the title poem, He's a good dog..., hints how eccentric and resistant to classification is this third volume. This title poem is based on a true war-time air incident. The good dog is also derived from a true dog, whose own story is told in the poem, the bleat dog (part of the free sample in volume 1).



In the meadow of night

The fourth volume is of 160 poems and two short stories on the theme of progress or lack of it.

part one: allure.

The allure of astronomy and the glamor of the stars.

part two: endeavor.

The romance and the terror of the onset of the space age and the cold war.

part three: fate.

An uncertain future of technologies and possible dystopias. Ultimate questions of reality.

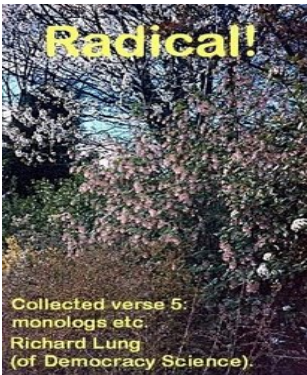
This fourth volume is of SF poetry. SF stands for science fiction, or, more recently, speculative fiction. The verse ranges from hard science to fantasy.

The literary tradition of HG Wells and other futurists exert a strong influence.

Otherwise, I have followed my own star, neither of my nature poet friends, Dorothy and Nikki, having a regard for SF poetry.

Yet science fiction poetry is a continuation of nature poetry by other means.

This may be my most imaginative collection. Its very diversity discourages summary.



Radical!

Volume 5 opens with a play about the most radical of us all, Mother Teresa: If the poor are on the moon...

This is freely available, for the time being, on my website: Poetry and novels of Dorothy Cowlin. (Performers are asked to give author royalties to the Mother Teresa Mission of Charity.)

The previously unpublished content consists largely of fairly long verse monologs, starting with artistic radicals, in "Symfonic Dreams," which is a sequence of The Impresario Berlioz, and The Senses of Sibelius.

Next, the intellectual radical, Sigmund Freud, followed by short poems on a sprinkling of more great names, who no doubt deserved longer. (Art is long, life is short.)

The title sequence, Radical! is made-up of verse about John Stuart Mill, Arthur Conan Doyle, George Bernard Shaw, HG Wells, George Orwell and JB Priestley.

Volume five ends with an environmental collection, largely available on my website: Poetry and novels of Dorothy Cowlin. However, those available verses have been more or less revised.

Should that website close down, I hope the green verses and the Mother Teresa play can still be obtained in this volume five.